DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS FORGIVENESS AS A PATHWAY TO HEALING

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ABSTRACT

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FORGIVENESS AS A PATHWAY

TO HEALING

by

Linda Irene Itson

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The context for this project is Greater Holy Temple Church. The focus was to create a safe community within the church where victims and survivors of abuse could address the impact of hurt and pain and the pathways to forgiveness and healing. Two workshops were presented where professionals came together from various disciplines to provide resources and education with emphasis on forgiveness as a pathway to healing. Qualitative analysis included interviews, observations, and evaluations. Participants were able to publically disclose their abuse and hurts and were able to utilize the resources for forgiveness needed to efficiently eradicate their hurt and pain.

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DEDICATION

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO ALL
THE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WOMEN IN MINISTRY.

INTRODUCTION

Open scars and wounds caused by domestic violence and sexual abuse leave no room for healing. This researcher's journey has allowed a pathway of understanding for development of the inner self to experience peace and strength.

The researcher explains in her Spiritual Autobiography the need of compassionate counsel and understanding to move to the next level of her life. Until one can move forward, life is put on hold, with no direction in sight. Personal struggles and watching others, has caused great concern and interest for the care of women in the struggle of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

The researchers' church has been chosen for the context to explore options that will enable others to reach for hope and rescue from the inevitable pain and suffering we face in life. The researcher's goal is to open options for people to have a safe place of refuge and a community to share in the time of trouble. Many will come that have not experienced the freedom of hurt and pain. The church must be a place where they can freely express themselves in a safe environment and find caring persons to help assist them through the trauma of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The church has been silent to long in the matter of domestic violence and sexual assault. The pulpit has to address these issues and give attention to those suffering from this tragedy. We can no longer sit in silence and allow this epidemic to continue in our communities and churches. Women are coming to our church looking for refuge and a safe place, and we have nothing in place for them.

The Synergy will examine a place of forgiveness and healing for people to worship. Domestic violence, sexual abuse and the church have left us stranded. We must have a place to go when pain calls from within. If we create this sharing community, people will be able to forgive and heal. Can forgiveness be a pathway to healing? If so, where is the church? The church has been silent far too long in dealing with this epidemic. No longer can preachers, teachers, evangelist or any religious leader stay in the background and allow violence to continue. The silence must be broken in our homes, communities, and yes, even in our church. Our churches have become a bed of silence, as we ignore the hurt and pain of others. When we sleep, we are not aware of our surroundings, and just like we are not aware in our normal surroundings, we are not aware in the church. But we can no longer sleep in the church.

When we come to the church, we must wake up to the truth of domestic violence and sexual assault. We must come with our eyes wide open and see the wounded as they enter in. The church is in denial when they ignore domestic violence and sexual assault. No one wants to admit this actually happens in their family or relationships, and the church is also in denial in thinking this never happens in the faith community. There is no discussion in the church regarding domestic violence and sexual assault. The preachers/ministers don't preach about it on Sunday morning in the pulpit. There is no teaching to those that have been abused or to those that are hurting, and the victims are left alone to deal with the internal sufferings of guilt, shame, and unforgiveness. We leave them stranded when we don't address the trauma in their lives. They are left with open wounds that may never heal. In order for one to forgive and heal, they must be taught how to master their feelings and emotions in a safe place.

T he church has been called a hospital for those that are sick, bruised, hurt and close to death. We can be sick in two ways, emotionally or physical. Either way can be the result from

domestic violence and sexual assault , or even from a church hurt. People often get hurt in the church and are left to heal on their own. Church wounds can leave a person devastated and sometimes hurt beyond repair. The hospital is where we go to get help for what ever attacks our physical and mental bodies. We seek assistance from the doctors, nurses, x-ray technicians and all staff to treat the needs of the patient. The church must be equipped to treat the mental and physical needs of the bruised, hurt, and close to death. The challenge to the church is to meet the needs of the victims, and assist them with ways of dealing with their hurt and pain.

Chapter One outlines the ministry focus in light of the researcher's life, ministry context, and the conjunction forgiveness and healing. This background forms the basis for the problem statement and the need for a paradigm shift. This researcher went to the church for refuge and a safe place to heal from the abuse in her home. But the church had nothing to offer, nor did it equip the researcher with information or guidance in the time of trouble. The researcher sat in silence hurting and no way of release. There was no one to talk to or place to go inside the church. the researcher was left to deal with anger. resentment. and frustration on her on. The process of forgiveness took longer because there was no safe place to heal.

Chapter Two examines the State of The Art in The Ministry Model. It also reviews the subject of the Church's response to domestic violence. The need for the church to take a different position regarding survivors and abuse. The church has been in denial of domestic violence and sexual assault for decades, which allows them to take the stance 'we don't have this in our church." Evidence will show how The reality of abuse has to be addressed and discussed in order for victims to forgive their perpetrators and heal from the wounds of the past. Victims must be heard and action must take place in order to have freedom of past hurt and pain. This chapter will explore historical facts that prevent the church from living in prison of their minds.

the church has been silent, but must now speak to the pain of the victim and release forgiveness and healing.

Chapter Three will set forth the theoretical foundations, historical, biblical, and theological upon which the model is based. The researcher aims to show critical points of domestic violence and how it relates to forgiveness and healing. The historical background gives reference to past abuse and how generations have allowed wrong interpretation of scripture to control the female gender. Historical interpretation may also be used to provide healing to the abused and wounded. Understanding the foundation of domestic violence will assist Christian pastors and leaders to help eradicate the silence in the community and the church.

Chapter Four, The Methodology depicts the plans for implementation for creating a safe community within the church for survivors and victims to address the impact of hurt and pain. The major component of this model is the pathway to forgiveness and healing. Victims of abuse come to church and have no place to release their hurt and pain. They sit on the pew Sunday after Sunday dealing with the same unforgiving feelings and no way of release. Many feel shame, guilt and some even anger. Victims must feel safe in discussing their inner pain, and they must have a safe community to communicate their feelings. Creating a safe community for victims to discuss their experience will help facilitate forgiveness as a pathway to healing. This chapter will focus on education, resources and knowledge, and victims will be able to share their inner feelings without being judged.

Chapter Five, Field Experience shows the researchers involvement in creating a safe place of healing and forgiveness. This chapter shares the results of professionals coming together from various disciplines to provide resources and education with emphasis on forgiveness and healing. Victims and survivors come to the church looking for the pastor and or leaders to help

them with the burdens of abuse and injustice. For many, the church is a safe place to rest from abuse and pain. Pastors and leaders in the church must be equipped to educate, train and teach victims and survivors how to forgive and heal from the trauma of domestic violence, and sometimes, spiritual abuse. Pastors/ clergy must be willing to allow professional counselors to assist them in the healing of the abused. Pastors are wise when they use the resources they have in the church, to assist them with broken hearts. The role of a professional is to help and assist, not to preach and take over. When dealing with broken hearts, emotional and physical abuse, and broken spirits, we need the compassion of strong leaders and strong helping professionals, to help with the journey of forgiveness as a pathway to healing.

Chapter Six presents Reflections, Summary, and Conclusions of this study. It also gives an overview of the project and the importance of this much needed ministry. The researcher will offer recommendations for future projects. The researcher was able to observe, collect data, and design a model to facilitate in the education of forgiveness and healing. It was the desire of this researcher to help victims and survivors understand they could be restored from the trauma and abuse that was inflicted upon them from their abuser. The dynamics of forgiveness and healing allowed victims to be cleansed from the inside out. The researcher wanted victims to be in a caring community and have a safe place to release their hurt and pain. It was important to have compassionate professionals in place to promote a pathway for forgiveness and healing for those that would like to experience having someone to talk to that knew what confidentiality meant. Being able to release the hurt and pain allowed the silent voice to be heard. They no longer have to sit on the pew in silence, or walk with heavy hearts. The wounds of rejection, guilt, shame and pain now have a place to heal. They now have a caring and safe community that will assist them with forgiveness as a pathway to healing.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The ministry focus is to develop a safe place for forgiveness and healing. First, the Spiritual Autobiography describes my journey that brought me to this point in history. Second, the context identifies the environment in which this area of ministry was chosen. Third, the combination of events that created a crisis help develop my problem statement.

Approximately three hours ago, the writer learned of a brutal killing that took place on the southwest side of the city. The woman's body was found in her apartment, by the police. She was beaten, and bruised. According to the news report, she had been there for three days, wrapped in blanket. A person of interest had been arrested in another city thirty five miles away. That person of interest was her estranged husband. Upon hearing the news, the writer became ill and sick on the inside.

A special relationship and bond with the couple made the news heart breaking. There were many cover-ups and heavy make up, but nothing covered the pain that was hidden on the inside for the victim. Where do you go when all else fails? Of course, it's the church. For many women, children, and even some men, the church is a "safe place". We can attend church on Sunday, go to bible study on Tuesday, choir rehearsal on Wednesday, and no one knows what happens after the car is put in the garage for the night.

Sunday is "dress up day" with everything covered up. Many come to church dressed in their Sunday best, but no one really knows the wounds and pain that exist on the inside knows. The pastor shakes your hand at the end of service, but he never sees what's behind the smile. The signs of trouble are hidden behind the many faces presented

to the pastor and members. Many victims (and perpetrators) hide behind the banner of the church. One can join, become a member and attend faithfully, and still live a life of hell. The hurt on the inside is never addressed. The healing never takes place because unforgiveness is always present. Victims of abuse may physically sit in the congregation, but not actually be a part of the congregation. Not only do victims sit in the congregation, but they may stand in the pulpit. God's messenger may be hiding behind the collar with issues that only the Lord knows exist. In today's society, we hear of many broken vessels of the cloth. Victimized by a parent, family member or close friend, the pain is the same.

The messages preached on Sunday mornings are geared to "the family" with messages such as: "keeping the family together" or "prayer changes things". So until "the change comes", victims stay in abusive relationships. The shame and guilt keeps them from sharing what is sapping the life out of their very existence. The silence of the pain keeps the wound from healing. Who do they talk to? Where do they go?

September 2, 1946, 3:20 in the morning, Ida Mae and Helena (affectionately called Aunt Love) rushed Katie to Cook County hospital. After four hours of labor, Katie gave birth to a 7 pound, five ounce baby girl, which she named Linda Irene Guy. It just so happened, Katie was visiting her sisters in Chicago, Illinois.

Katie got her strength back and decided to go back to Flint. Nine months later she was pregnant again. She gave birth to a seven pound baby boy, which she named Luther Guy Jr.

Living in the Big House

At the age of two, Linda remembers her grandparents, Della and Matt Calloway. Grandma Dell was short and dark, and grandpa was rather tall and looked white. Their house was white with a long porch. There were several trees in front of the house and the yard appeared to

be like a big playground. There was a small trailer behind the "Big House". It had steps close to the back door. Uncle Dee Dee, as he was called, lived alone in the trailer, but would always come in the house to eat. Uncle Dee Dee was tall and Linda thought he was white. It was in her teen years, she learned he was black. This was grandpa's oldest brother. All of grandpa's relatives looked white, because their mother was Indian/African decent and their father was white.

The researcher and her brother loved to play on the porch and her grandparents would let them swing in the yard until they got tired. Grandma and Grandpa showed the researcher and Luther, on a daily basis, how much they loved them. They would hug and kiss them all the time. The researcher remembers walking up the hill to church and then coming back to sit on the porch to eat cookies. Grandma was a quiet woman that loved to cook and take care of her children. She would always pray in the morning and it appeared to be all day. She would always be in the kitchen, and when it was cake time, the researcher would be right by her side to lick the bowls. Grandpa was quiet, and always had a pipe in his mouth.

Grandma used to sing in the choir and grandpa was a deacon in the Baptist church. This was the beginning of the researcher's spiritual journey. Little did she know she would follow in Grandma's foot steps? At the age of five, the writer and Luther returned to Flint. Aunt Love also moved to Flint, and two years later married Maurice Alexander. At the age of ten, the researchers returned to Texas with Aunt Love and the researcher's three week old cousin Cynthia. Grandma Dell had been diagnosed with breast cancer, and the family was asked to come as soon as possible. The researcher didn't understand the seriousness of the trip, but glad to be on the train going to see grandma. This was also a chance for her to help with the new baby.

The researcher remembers going to the hospital, walking down a long hall and finally getting to a room. She peeped in the door, and to her surprise, Grandma was in the bed. The room was white, and everything in the room seemed to be white. The only person in the room was Grandma. Grandma beckoned for the researcher to come to the bed, but for some reason, the researcher was afraid, and couldn't quite understand why her only grandma was in that big room. After turning away, the researcher sat quietly in the hall and waited for Aunt Love to come out of the room. Aunt Love was crying and put her hand out for the researcher to come. As they walked to the outside door, The researcher looked back at the room, and tears began to roll down her cheeks. She never saw her grandma again.

This was the lady that taught her about God and how to sing on the porch. The researcher often thought about Grandma as she grew up, and felt a sense of guilt because she didn't go to grandma's bed. She never got that last hug and kiss.

Saying goodbye to grandma

The researcher rode in the car for the first time up the hill to the church. She remembers going up the steps into the church. It was not the same because Grandma wasn't in the choir. But when the choir began to sing, you could almost hear Grandma's voice in the midst of the singing. All of grandma's children were there, even Uncle Floyd, the baby son in the Army, who flew home from Germany. The family took up one side of the church. The funeral seemed to last forever. Everyone was crying, and the researcher was very sad.

The family decided to stay in Texarkana, Texas for a week. It was good to be at the Big House and swing in the yard. It was during this stay, the siblings decided to bring grandpa Matt back to Flint. After 48 years of marriage, Maple Street was not the same and he was willing to

leave. He would stay with Aunt Love, and Uncle Bud could help take care of him. At the age of 92, Grandpa Matt died, and now the researcher was without her maternal grandparents.

The spiritual role models will always be a part of the researcher's life and because of the impact that was made from both grandparents, the researcher's first spiritual role models will always be the greatest grandparents in the world.

Lasting effects

Children experience many things in their lives, some of which could lead to low self esteem. Many children are sensitive to name calling, being ridiculed, hostility, and any negative behavior that may cause them to withdraw from family, friends and even society.

The researcher's mother always wanted the best for her. There was nothing held back when it came to the researcher and Luther. Her children meant the world to her, and whatever she could do to interweave powerful ideas with biblical principles and education, she would do it. At the age of five, the researcher's parents divorced. Being a single parent sometimes frustrated Katie, which would cause her to be depressed and despondent. Many times after coming home from work, she would feed the children, and go to bed for the rest of the day. This would bring joy to Luther, because he could stay outside and play until dark. But when the sun would go down, the researcher and Luther both knew to be in the house. As the researcher got older, she realized this was her mother's way of dealing with frustration and anger. This had an impact on the writer because she felt the only way to deal with issues was to go to bed. Later in life, this would be the way the researcher dealt with physical abuse, just go to bed, and maybe things would be better in the morning.

The researcher also realized how her mother could have been angry from childhood hurts or even hurts received from being a single mother, doing the best she could, with no help.

Thinking of the past made the researcher feel guilty, because at times, she felt responsible for the way things in life turned out for her mother. Of course this wasn't the case, but when you are young, you don't know the truth. It was the word of God that helped the writer to stay focused. Having a relationship with God, allowed the researcher to continue her spiritual journey. The journey was filled with prayer and scriptures. The researcher didn't feel comfortable discussing her feelings with anyone, and the only way to survive was read scriptures and pray. The scriptures became a daily routine for this researcher, which allowed her to have peace in the middle of her crisis.

The researcher loved the church, and at the age of seventeen, and three visits, she became a member of Greater Holy Temple Church. Excited and happy, the researcher started going to Sunday school, bible study, and later joined the choir. Grandma Dell would have been so happy.

By this time, the researcher was dating her former next door neighbor, John [redacted]. John and the researcher both worked for General Motors. They worked in the same plant, the researcher worked second shift, and John worked first shift. They would see each other in passing.

This experience helped the researcher grow closer to God. She began praying more often, and seeking God for direction in their lives.

A new baby.

Two years later, the researcher was pregnant and everyone was anticipating the new baby. The researcher worked until her eighth month of pregnancy and took a leave of absence. July 3, 1970, Monica Lynn [redacted] was born. Weighing in at 7 pounds and 7 ounces, The researcher and her husband were proud parents. The family of three was doing well until the

researcher's husband expressed his feelings concerning church members visiting too much. The husbands feelings escalated. and soon the researcher and her husband were having problems. This put a strain on the marriage. The researcher suggested marriage counseling, but to no avail. Two years passed with tension in the household. and finally they both decided it was best for them to separate. It took a lot of praying for the researcher to make it through this time in her life. Attending Church was the only way she made it through the week. It gave her the strength to make it from day to day. One year later, they were divorced.

Starting over.

The researcher didn't allow the divorce to keep her from returning back to school. Not only did she have to contend with a full time job at AC Spark plug, a division of General Motors, she had to find a competent babysitter for Monica. When she couldn't afford a babysitter, she would take Monica to class. The instructors were kind enough to allow children in class if they were quiet. There were some semesters, the researcher would have to sit out, but she kept going back. The researcher enjoyed going to school and was determined to finish. It took seven years to finish Mott Community College. The researcher's father was able to see her walk across the stage, and share her excitement. He died shortly after graduation due to a massive heart attack.

After receiving her Social Work Technician Degree, the researcher enrolled at The University of Michigan, again determined to finish school. The researcher decided to take three classes during the second semester. It was not easy going to school, taking care of Monica, and working all at the same time. But in order to finish, it had to be done. Sitting in the back of her English class was [redacted]. By the end of the semester, they decided to go to the movies. This was the beginning of a new courtship.

The relationship started slow, and all seemed to be well. It wasn't until the first argument; the writer noticed the spirit of control. Even though the researcher was told when to go and come, who to be with and sometimes what to wear, the researcher never realized how she was being controlled. She never thought of this as being associated with domestic violence. But instead of taking heed, she continued with the relationship. During a trip to the store, the researcher. her daughter, and [redacted] were in a terrible car accident. The car was demolished. the researcher had a broken arm, Monica had a broken neck and three days later, the Doctor found out the three vear old had a broken shoulder. [redacted] never received a scratch. Of all people. why did he have to be the one that was spared? From all the mental and physical abuse he put the researcher through. he should have been the one seriously hurt. The researcher stopped attending church, her prayer life was at a stand still, and she very seldom went to visit her family. She was embarrassed and felt guilty because of her spiritual background. The researcher thought all negative things that happened to her was deserved because she was not married and spending to much time with this relationship.

During this time, the researcher observed behavior she wasn't comfortable with. She began looking for scriptures that would justify the relationship. She was struggling with being in a relationship and not married. She also experienced mental and physical abuse. She didn't have anyone in the church to go to, which made it difficult to continue going to church. There was no support group to attend, no particular person to talk to and the pastor would just say, "we are going to pray about it". The preacher never preached about domestic violence, but he would often time say" women obey your husband". Listening to this on a regular basis, where could the researcher go? Who could the researcher talk to? Where was the safe place in the church? Struggling with doing the right thing made it difficult for the researcher.

There were many signals for the researcher to dissolve the relationship, but she didn't pay attention to the signals. The researcher and [redacted] began praying together, and reading the scriptures was a part of their daily lives. 1St Corinthians 7: 9 says, "It's better to marry than to burn". She took this as a clue; things were going to be better. After two years of dating, The researcher and [redacted] decided to get married. Of course she wanted to do it "the right way" and ask her pastor to marry them. This was not a good idea.

Elder [redacted] (and the researcher's mother) was not pleased with the researchers' decision to get married, but consented to marry them. He wanted her to wait and seek God. But the researcher thought if they got married, she could "change" [redacted] and he would be a better person. He would join the church, and become a good Christian. All he needed was direction, and the researcher knew everything would work out just fine, so she thought.

The researcher experienced mental and physical abuse on a daily basis. If the dishes were not done in a timely manner, it was going to be a fight. If the researcher was not home by a certain time, it was going to be verbal or physical abuse. Name calling, pushing and shoving was certainly going to take place. Just when she thought the marriage was getting better, it got worse. [redacted] wanted to have children, and the researcher wanted to wait. Two years later, weighing in at 6 pounds and 14 ounces, Keela Denise [redacted] was born. The physical and mental abuse continued even after the researcher returned home from the hospital. At times it was unbearable, but the researcher prayed herself through. Her self esteem was lower than it ever had been in her life. She tried everything she knew to please her husband. The fear of not pleasing him caused the researcher to be nervous and sometimes sick.

Back in the work force.

The researcher returned to work after a 9 month leave. She was glad to be back and co-workers were glad to have her back. Going to work was her relief and refuge. But when it was time to go home, her stomach would rage on the inside in fear of what might take place upon her return. Only a few of her friends were aware of what was going on. They would call and pray for the writer and sometimes come by the house.

[redacted] eventually discouraged the researcher from allowing friends to stop by, but she would communicate with them at work. Her family knew something was wrong, and would ask the researcher questions. Her reply would be, "[redacted] is just upset because he is not working". Although he wasn't looking for a job, it was the only way the researcher could justify what was going on in her life. The researcher was not aware of the domestic violence that was about to change her life.

The researcher enrolled back in school and was excited about her classes. [redacted] was not happy, and did everything he could to discourage the researcher from going to school. But this time, she had a made up mind to continue. Despite the threats on her life, she continued to take one class at a time.

Trying to manage home, work and school, the researcher was exhausted. In December 1979, the ground was covered with snow and it was very cold. The researcher left for work early and by the time she arrived to her job, she was to sick to get out of the car. Several people were sent home the day before with the flu and this was not the time for her to be sick. After returning home and staying in the bed for several days, the symptoms were worse. Thank God, she got an appointment to see the Doctor in two days.

The Doctors office was full of people coughing and sneezing, on both sides of the researcher. By the time the researcher went in to see the Doctor, she felt nauseated. But when she left out of the office, and found out she was pregnant, she was really sick. She cried all the way home.

The researcher knew this was not a good time to bring another child into a marriage filled with mental and verbal abuse. Her mind was not stable and she was disturbed about her future.

The researcher often sought ways to dissociate herself from the cruel words and physical abuse. She would take long walks when she could or she would drive on the express way for hours. Driving would sometimes help her to think clearly. This time, she couldn't even think clearly."It was her fault she got pregnant", and "it was her fault there was no money in the house". She was miserable, and she knew the future was going to be miserable for she, and her children. How could she have allowed herself to get into such an awful situation?

Now she could understand why her pastor wanted her to wait. This was a time she had to trust and depend on God. The only place she could go was to the word of God. The question came, "if God really loved me, why did this to happen to me"? The answer came, "if you really loved God, why do you question Him"?

Making the right Decision

The researcher gave birth to a healthy 8 pound 14 ounce baby boy, Erik Omar [redacted]. The joy of seeing her son gave her renewed strength. Mentally, she was prepared to hear, "we don't have any money, why don't you go back to work" or "if you don't work, I don't either" or "we are suffering because you are not working". And her response was" Oh well". Finally, after going back to church on a regular basis, trusting in God as never before, and waiting on God, she

took a position and would not move. The researcher was under the control of God and not [redacted]. It wasn't easy, but she had a made up mind to follow God.

After staying home for nine months, the researcher returned to work with a purpose in mind, to get a divorce. This was a hard decision, not because of the marriage, but because of the church. Knowing this was the researcher's second divorce and how the Church feels about marriage and divorce, made it uncomfortable. The researcher was hesitant in telling the pastor what her plans were. But after weeks of prayer, she asked for an appointment.

Elder [redacted] listened patiently, and then told the researcher they would pray about it. The researcher had respect for her pastor, but knew she would proceed with the divorce. She knew that someone would get hurt, or possibly die if the marriage had continued. She was prepared for either way.

This was the time in the researcher's life she really needed someone in the church to listen to her and give support. The church was not equipped to deal with situations of this sort. The researcher would never discuss this with family members because she didn't want them to get involved. Their emotions and feelings would be too involved. The researcher decided she could do this alone. The day of the divorce, the researcher shared with a co-worker, she would be leaving early for lunch to attend court and finalize the divorce. She left, went to court, picked up lunch and was back to work. It was final, and she was fine.

This was another chapter in her life that would be closed. God allowed the researcher to go through this season in her life for a reason, why, she wasn't sure, but knew it was a reason. Patricia Cranton describes in her book, Professional Development as Transformative Learning; "becoming self-directed is also described as a process- for some individuals, a process that could

be transformative". [1]The transformation that took place in Linda's life during this experience enabled her to move to the next phase of life.

Through the dysfunctional and difficult times, the researcher learned to empower herself and be self motivated. Her spiritual awareness took on new meaning and moved her closer to God. Every time she thinks of where she was and how God delivered her out of bondage, she gives God the praise. It was His grace and mercy that brought her out of darkness.

After the divorce, the researcher returned to the University of Michigan. School meant more to her than before, because she now had a purpose and goal. Again she was determined to finish school, no matter how long it took.

Tragedy in the Church.

The researcher enjoyed going to church. No matter what was going on in her life, church was the highlight of her life, and it became a safe place for the researcher.

It wasn't long, and another tragedy happened. After eight years of teaching, one Sunday, the pastor approached the researcher and told her" he would be teaching the new members class from now on". There was no explanation, no communication and no conversation. Needless to say, the researcher was devastated. As a matter of fact, the researcher was lost. For the first time in the history of her membership, she had no direction. Never had she been reprimanded for insubordination, disrespect, or disloyalty to her church or leader. She never experienced a hurt such as this. Not even the experience of divorce took her to the level of hurt as this.

Learning to Forgive

It had been six long years, and the hurt was still there.(hurt from physical and mental abuse, hurt from abuse within the church, the hurt of betrayal, the hurt of having no place to turn.) The hurt from my pastor, however, seen to hurt the most, but the researcher managed to

[1] Patricia Cranton, Professional Development as Transformative Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-bass, 1996), 51

keep going. The tears still coming, the heart still ached, and sometimes the researcher felt anger. It hurts when you know in your heart; you have been sentenced for a crime, knowing you are innocent, and have been pronounced guilty. The researcher felt as though she had been raped of her spiritual dignity and assaulted with injustice to her character.

Attending the National Convocation Convention, the researcher heard a message on forgiveness. This took her back to childhood and how people are to care for each other. The love and care the researcher's grandmother taught, would all surface at this conference. Just listening to the speaker allowed the researcher to release anger and frustration regarding the hurt and pain. Words of encouragement entered the heart of the researcher and she felt the burden of hurt being released from her mind. Had the researcher's grandmother been alive, teaching and training would no doubt have taken place in the home, and the researcher may have learned much more quickly how to deal with forgiveness and hurt. It is important to have people in your lifer to assist you when you need it the most.

Going to Memphis was rewarding and worth the trip for the researcher. It helped change her life to be a better person and a woman that would be pleasing to God. It also helped her learn the meaning of forgiveness and healing. The researcher was at a point in her life, no matter what others said or did, she was willing to forgive and move to the next level in her life. Giving in to the spirit of God, allowed the researcher to be set free from the bondage of unforgiveness she held within. The researcher realized her season had changed from the past hurt of long ago; low self esteem, two failed marriages, church hurt, and any other hurt along the way. The journey of the past allowed the researcher to learn herself, and who she was. The pain and suffering allowed her to see how God was always with her and never left her.

How do we know when we have forgiven others? We are to forgive others as God forgives us. Healing comes through the grace of God. True healing, brings true forgiveness.

The Context

The saga of Greater Holy Temple began almost a half a century ago when Elder Roger L. Jones, now Bishop Jones, a young minister who traveled the country preaching the gospel, was called to Flint. Michigan. In the first full vear of Greater Holv Temple's existence. manv souls were added to the congregation. The membership increased by leaps and bounds. Many voung people were drawn to the temple bv the dvnamic voung Elder Jones's modernistic and relevant preaching of the gospel, while at the same time maintaining the traditional sanctity and godliness teachings valued bv the seasonal saints of that dav.

Property around the 3311 Mildred Street location was purchased, but it still wasn't enough room for the new growth of the growing church. The membership looked at other sites and even inspected another church building. God directed Elder Jones to look at a new location on Dort highway. The congregation approved the site and it was purchased in 1975. The site located at 6702 N. Dort highway, was the scene of groundbreaking ceremonies on July 1977. The church is located in a remote area with only two or three houses on the street. A gas station is on the corner, with a store across the street. Directly in back of the parking lot in the back of the church is a community of low income housing. One mile from this particular community are several acres of low income apartments. Many of the residents are either on assistance or have low paying jobs. The community is mixed with 60 % African Americans, 30 % whites, and 10 % interracial families. Crime is on the rise in the neighborhoods and drug activity is out in the open.

The "projects" are not in walking distance to the church, but the bus stops are available and operate during the day and night.

Unfortunately, domestic violence and sexual assault is common in this area. It is not unusual to see physical fights early in the morning or late at night. Children witness fights in the home and in the street. Many children are exposed to fights before they go to school and often exhibit behavior that is not appropriate in class. Police are called on a regular basis. Attendance in church may not be on a regular basis, but often a safe haven for a few hours for many women living in dangerous environments. Some come with children, and because the church has a strong dance ministry, it draws children of all ages. Women may walk to the church during the day for assistance with food, gas or clothing. The food pantry is not always open at the church, and women may be asked to return for assistance.

Several members of the church also live in this community, and have been very open about their broken lives. Some have experienced drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Having no one to turn to or share your most intimate thoughts can be a living nightmare. Then pain inside can cause the process of life to be almost unbearable. The researcher made an appointment with the pastor and discussed the survival of women and even men that seemed to be so far away. Many were broken vessels and had no way of escape for inner healing. There is a need for the church to provide a cleansing for the broken, unforgiving, (self and others) to a journey of healing. After a lengthy discussion, The pastor gave the writer permission to use Greater Holy Temple as a context site for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Faith Based Community.

Questions: How can one bring inner healing and forgiveness to domestic violence and sexual assault victims in the faith based community? Will forgiveness bring healing or will

healing bring forgiveness? The church needs a program or workshop to address the needs of the broken.

Domestic violence and sexual assault exist within the context of the church and community without any one saying a word. The concern the researcher had at this point is how many women are sitting in the pews with baggage? But even more, what is being done to help alleviate the root of the injustice? Do we even understand the meaning of Domestic violence and sexual assault? But more important, how do we break free from those who have hurt us? The researcher's SA opened the door for trying to understand forgiveness. Many of us have walked around with some type of bitterness or unforgiveness in our hearts. Sunday after Sunday, we listen to the pastor or minister preach the word of God, and still go home with a heart of pain because of unforgiveness. In the church of God in Christ, we dance, sing and shout, but still carry baggage home. Emotional abuse may be just as painful as physical abuse. Breaking free from the past will not always be overnight, for some, it may take years. But one thing is true, if we never address the situation, hurt, or the pain, it will never go away. It will lie dormant until a smell, experience, or even a certain color reminds us of the past. We allow ourselves to be in prison and become hostage to the past.

The researcher realized in her context the importance of forgiveness and pain within the church. 'And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But, if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." [2] Mark 11:25, 26 "To choose forgiveness and to walk in His truth is God's prescribed pathway- your journey to freedom." [3] "Choosing to be different is our salvation. It is our choice. The choice to be different brings new life and makes us

[2] Ibid
[3] Demoss, Nancy Leigh. Choosing Forgiveness, Chicago, ILL. Moody Publishers. 2006

new creations. This decision must be made on a daily basis. Old habits have a way of sneaking back into our lives if we are not conscious and consistent in our commitment to choose new life everyday."[4]

[4] Hollies, Linda H. Inner healing for broken vessels a Domestic Violence Guide. Cleveland, Ohio. The Pilgrim Press. 2006

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

The challenge for this researcher was finding pertinent information regarding domestic violence and sexual assault and understanding the meaning of forgiveness. There was literature on domestic violence, the church, and many articles from books and journals that addressed forgiveness that help facilitate this work.

This researcher found relevant information to support the ministry model on domestic violence and forgiveness as a pathway to healing. This information could be used as a model for future investments for the Christian community. It is by no means a cure it all, but a resource and educational guide for those seeking understanding of forgiveness and healing.

The church as we know it has been a place of refuge for the hurt and broken. A Sunday morning worship service offers good preaching, singing, and teaching, but is this enough to reach the victims of abuse? Is the church offering education and resources for forgiveness and healing? If not, we must equip victims with more than a song and sermon. We must provide a safe place to educate, teach and train ministers, teachers and victims how to be survivors and heal from their past hurts.

There are more victims in our churches than we care to admit. The pews are filled with women in silence that are hurting and filled with pain. Most women are too embarrassed and ashamed to discuss the violence in their home or relationships. This researcher recognizes that there is no

quick fix to domestic violence and sexual assault, but believes the congregations can be trained and enlightened on the devastation of this journey of bondage to freedom.

This chapter provides information on domestic violence, forgiveness, and the silence in the church. The main focus of this model is to provide a safe place for victims of abuse to come and release anger, resentment, shame and guilt. Understanding forgiveness and how it affects the lives of victims of abuse will be the gateway to the process of healing.

First, information on domestic violence will provide education to members in the church that have no understanding of violence and sexual assault. Domestic violence is not specific to a certain class of people, nor is it happening to a particular race. Domestic violence has no color, no race or no socioeconomic face. it could happen to any of us. Second, the impact of forgiveness on the mind and in the heart will enlighten readers on the process, identification and owning our emotions in response to unforgiveness. Third. the silence in the church has been a hindrance for victims. If the church remains silent, what happens to victims that enter our churches?

Understanding Domestic Violence.

When it comes to domestic violence. some faith leaders turn to their religious texts to convey to men and women that it's better to destroy the body and save the soul.

Rev. Marie Fortune "argues that when the body is destroyed in domestic violence. so too is the soul."[5]

She goes on to say:

"For many people, that's still an assumption, that a house of worship is where you go when you need help. Fortune also states, "Faith based communities can and should be supporting

[5] Rev. Marie Fortune. Churches must serve as healing space in domestic violence. The Grand Rapids Press. Grand, Michigan . 2005

efforts to assist battered women, and professionals who are members of faith communities should be more visible. because they are an extensions of the ministry."[6] This researcher agrees with Rev. Fortune because we are in a day, where many church's have access to professional persons in their congregation, but the sad truth, many leaders may be intimidated with the professional and not use them. This only hurts the body, because the victims are the ones that really suffer.

Professional social workers or counselors have been trained in the area of domestic violence and sexual assault, and understand the ramifications of the law and confidentiality. Many times clergy counsel victims and not knowingly, give wrong information. Not only that, victims are sometimes sent back to the situation and told. "pray about it, and God will make a way." Many women have lost their lives going back into a situation only to be killed.
Rev. Fortune also states; "otherwise well intentioned faith leaders often put victims of domestic violence in a position of having to choose between their faith- which either is against or holds that women submit to their husbands- and their own safety"[7].

Fortune adds "churches, synagogues, and mosque should preach nonviolence in all relationships, and take a more active role when a member is abused. They should be a resource for shelters, financial support and calling on its other members for professional knowledge."[8] This research is not to minimize the pastor or leaders in the church, it is only for exposure of domestic violence and sexual assault to the mass amount of victims that sit in our church. The pastors are a vital part of healing in the church because more than likely, when victims come to the church, they look for the pastor for assistance or guidance. Pastors can offer spiritual counseling and sometimes therapeutic counseling, depending on their education. But it's wise for

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[6] Fortune
[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid

pastors to utilize professional counselors if they are available. In her book, The Cry of Tamar, Cooper-White states:

> Clergy can contribute a great deal to the healing process, and because of their intimacy with the realm of the spirituality, their training, and their role as religious professionals, they can bring a different and needed authority of reassurance and spiritual healing to their survivor's recovery process.[9]

The church must take a stand and speak to the violence that erodes our community and church. The church has allowed the women to feel abandoned and left alone when it comes to domestic violence. Because the subject is never addressed, women feel isolated sitting on the pew. It leaves some to feel even God has abandoned them. In her book, Wounds of the Spirit, Traci West states:

> "Victim survivors of male sexual and physical assault may feel that their needs vanish even from God's sight. They may experience a collapsed connection with the divine grace-a feeling of abandonment or deliberate rejection by God. It may seem that God is not able to see a woman's woundedness and deprivation or that God deliberately chooses t ignore them because the woman deserves to suffer. "[10]

In order for women to begin the process of forgiveness and healing, they must feel they are in a safe place and that someone cares. They must be in a place where they can address their issues and after speaking from their heart, available resources will be in place to assist them with their needs

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[9] Cooper-White, The Cry of Tamar, 182

[10] Traci C. West. Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women. Violence and Resistance Ethics. New York Press. 1999

West also states:

> "Women need to find a way to retreat emotionally and spiritually both during the actual ordeal of the assault and in its aftermath, during their subsequent attempt to cope with the damage to the self left in its wake."[11]

It would be so comforting for victims and survivors to find peace and comfort in the church. If the church could be a place for the abused and damaged souls to retreat, emotionally and spiritually, wounds of the spirit, may find forgiveness and healing. This would be true discipleship among the believers if they were to offer a safe place to help heal the broken hearts.

In his book, Domestic Violence: What every Pastor Needs to know, Al Miles interviewed 158 clergy. Most of the clergy denied there was abused women in their congregations. Many of the clergy interviewed, stated their church was "abuse free".[12] One clergy stated that the seven hundred men and women in his church were far to progressive and sophisticated to get caught in a web of destruction and evil that results from domestic violence."[13]

Myles addresses several myths in his book, one being if positive attitudes, prayer, and faith is exercised, God will free Christians of domestic violence. This myth does not free women of domestic violence, it only perpetuates it. Another myth highlighted by Miles is domestic violence only occurred in certain cultural, socioeconomic and racial groups. Because of myths like this, ministers or clergy in wealthy church's make the assumptions, domestic violence is not happening in their

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[11] Ibid,63
[12] Al Miles. Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know.
[13] Ibid

congregations. This has caused some women in affluent congregations to believe this myth as well, and therefore, encourages silence of the abuse.

Still another myth, Miles addresses is that the victim can stop the battering by changing their behavior. But it is not their behavior that causes battering. Myles quotes Neil Jacobson and John Gottman,'s book "When Men Batter"," Battering has little to do with what women do or don't do. What they say or don't say. It is the batterer's responsibility-and his alone- to stop bring abusive."[14]

Miles also stated," The issue of Domestic Violence is messy. We've known about it for a *long time, even if we didn't name it. The insidiousness is when you know the people and* it's fight here. Its amazing that we still tend to blame women for men's behavior."[15]

Knowing and doing something about domestic violence in the church is two different things. As we understand women and their strong beliefs in the church, we are less likely to see women leave abusive relationships." Women of faith, says Nancy Nason-Clark, are less likely to leave an abusive relationship, more likely to look to the church for Christian counseling, and more likely to wait longer to take action than women outside the faith community."[16]

In her article, "Breaking the Holy Hush". Gail Martin, quoted Catherine Clark Kroger. "The rate of abuse in the Christian homes is exactly the same as in the general population".[17] The spiritual and emotional effects may last longer than the

[14] Ibid., 67.

[15] Gail Martin. Breaking "the Holy Hush" Evangelicals Find New Resources To Address Domestic Violence. Sojourners Magazine. Vol. 36. Issue 1 January 2007 Pg. 24 +

[16] Ibid. Pg 24+

[17] Gail Martin. Breaking "the Holy Hush" Evangelicals Find New Resources To Address Domestic Violence. Sojourners Magazine. Vol. 36. Issue 1 January 2007 Pg 24+

physical effects of abuse. Women of faith struggle with the understanding of why God allows such pain and why am I going through this?

Because of this researcher's traditional teachings on marriage and family, shame, and guilt, isolation was a strong presence in the church. Catherine Kroeger and Nancy Nason Clark affirm God's opposition towards abuse in their book, No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resource to Counteract Domestic Violence. This book helps minister to victims of domestic violence.

If our ministers would take the time to examine this book, some of our Sunday morning messages would certainly address domestic violence and promote forgiveness, hope and healing. "If God made us competent ministers, then we must declare God's love and empowerment of all persons. We must insist that our spiritual leaders point to ways of life rather than death."[18] Kroeger and Clark's book sends a strong message in response to domestic violence. "When violence against women ranks as the foremost public health problem in America, we must demand that the problem be addressed from the pulpit. When the United Nations declares that it is the most wide spread form of violence throughout the globe, God's people must take notice."[19]

Women need a place of refuge and a safe place to heal from the damage of domestic violence. Ministers must be able to provide that safe place and encourage communication for the wounded. Women have experienced abandonment, hopelessness, shame and guilt. When all else fails, they go to the church to seek spiritual guidance from the ministers.

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[18] Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark. No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence. Downers, Grove,IL. Intervarsity Press. 2002.139

[19] Nancy Nason-Clark and Catherine Clark Kroeger. Refuge From Abuse: Healing and Hope for Abused Christian Women. Downers Grove. IL. Intervarsity Press. 2004. 47

Syndromes of Abuse

According to Lenore Walker's cycle of violence model, there are three critical phases in the cycle or pattern of abuse: the tension building phase, the acute battering incident phase, and the honeymoon phase. She states:

> "During the tension building phase, there may be minor physical battering and verbal abuse. The woman often attempts to placate her partner, though rarely successfully. This phase is followed by the acute battering phase, during which the man's physical violence escalates and the woman is unable to placate him. Following this extremely violent phase comes the honeymoon phase, during which the man shows remorse toward the victim, attempts to convince his partner of his love for her and her needs. The woman is convinced that the man she sees during this phase is the one she loves, and she physically remains in the relationship. She convinces herself the honeymoon phase can last. And the cycle continues."[20]

Many women in abusive situations experience this cycle of abuse, but refuse to leave because she thinks her spouse loves her and wants to change. She even convinces herself that he "didn't mean to do it, he was just mad." The excuses continue over and over, and she denies the fact this has been going on during the entire relationship.

Victims often think they will never be able to leave the relationship and they are trapped. Persons on the outside fail to understand why abused women do not simply leave their relationship. Lenore Walker states "the battered woman's perception of her own control over her situation has a great deal to do with it. Even if she were able to escape, if she believes that she cannot leave or cannot survive on her own, she will not leave."[21]

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[20] Lenore Walker, The battered woman. New York. Harper and Row 1979
[21] Ibid. page 32

Walker terms this as "Learned Helplessness" which means, even when it is apparent the victim can leave, they did not do so because they have reached a point where they perceive that nothing they do will alleviate the situation.[22]

Related to learned helplessness and the cycle of violence is the concept of battered woman syndrome. Again, Walker theorizes that

> "some women remained in physically, sexually, or psychologically abusive relationships because of extreme fear and the belief that there is no escape. The victim also feels as though she has no choice but to remain with her abusive partner. This syndrome develops over time, as the cycle of violence occurs and the woman loses hope and feels unable to deal effectively with her situation."[23]

This researcher understands from personal experience what Ms Walker is saying. But to add to this, would be guilt and shame. Living in a family where no one else has vocalized abuse, makes it hard to express what may be happening in an abusive relationship. Not only do some victims have to deal with the family, they have to deal with church members that may have no understanding what living in an abusive situation looks and feels like.

D. Graham and E. Rawlings, in their book: Bonding with abusive dating partners discuss anther syndrome, which is called the Stockholm syndrome or hostage syndrome.

> "Theorist have argued that battered women are analogous to hostages because of the physical and psychological threats made by the perpetrator. Such women feel as though there is no way out of this situation in which their intimate partners are in complete control. However, the battered woman experiences occasional kindness and support from her partner and as a result of her isolation from outsiders, develops a bond with her captor."[24]

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[22] Ibid, page 32
[23] Ibid, Page 33
[24] D. Graham and E. Rawlings. Bonding with abusive dating partners: Dynamics of Stockholm syndrome. In B. Levy(Ed.), Dating violence: Young women in danger (Page 119-135). Seattle, WA. Seal Press. 1991

Her survival depends on her partner. While some theories attempt to explain the batter's behavior. others have focused on the behavior of the victim. The question of why women stay in abusive relationships, a response that seem illogical, has been posed by many researchers.

> " Psychological theories that have tried to explain why women in abusive relationships have suggested that anv of several factors may be responsible, including self blame, denial, loyalty to the sanctity of marriage, and feeling responsible for helping the batterer."[25]

Dealing with domestic violence in the church, and understanding the cycle of patterns of abuse, is needed to help assist victims through their pain. Victims need a place where they can be educated and trained on issues of domestic violence. The church community can be a common ground for understanding what the cycle of abuse can do to ones inner feelings. Understanding forgiveness and how it releases pain, suffering, frustration maybe, unresolved issues. This researcher contends if the church were a place for forgiveness and healing, victims would have a safe place to go and communicate their inner thoughts and feelings, and maybe healing would eventually come.

Is Forgiveness necessary?

"Loving others often require that we forgive them for transgression against us. When Christian forgive, both decide to grant forgiveness and experience emotional forgiveness."[26]

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[25] K. Ferrano & J. Johnson. How women experience battering: The process of victimization. Social Problems, 30.325—339. D. Folllingstad. A. Neckerman. & J. Vormbrock. Reactions to victimization and coping strategies of battered women. Clinical Psychology Review, 8 873-890

[26] Everett Worthington Jr. & N.G. Wade. The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 Journal of Psychology 50,

"They usually believe they should forgive from the pure motive of love toward the neighbor. That neighbor has temporarily; we hope made himself or herself an enemy through transgressing against us. People do not always forgive from the pure motive of altruistic love. In fact people often think of altruistic forgiveness is difficult, if not impossible. Scriptures tell us to forgive, but offer little specific guidance on how to do so."[27]

In her article, Forgiveness and Life in the Community Susan Hylen states;

> "Domestic violence will only begin to decrease when our society recognizes it as a problem and communicates that it is wrong. An understanding of corporate forgiveness coincides with the goal of preventing violence because both involve not only the repentance of the sinner, but the accountability of the community and the need to face our own sins. When the church can recognize it own complicity in the sin of domestic violence and when members hold one another accountable for the changes that will be necessary to live as Jesus' disciples, the church can offer forgiveness to others with greater depth of understanding and become a witness to those outside its bounds who struggle against violence."[28]

She also states:

> "Through the practice of forgiveness, the church participates in the reign of God, for we recognize both the grace that is given to us and our calling as agents of God's grace to others."[29]

God make it clear we are to forgive others in order for Him to forgive us. Is forgiveness necessary? Yes it is! There is no question; we are to ask God to help us in this area if we are not where we should be. We are to forgive as soon as possible with a pure heart. Forgiveness is not only for the benefit of the victim, but for the abuser as well.

84-96.2003

[27] Ibid, page 84-96

[28] Susan Hylen. Forgiveness and Life In Community. Vol. 54. Issue 2. Page 145+ 2000

[29] Ibid, Page 145+

CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATIONS FOR MINISTRY

Historical Foundation

Historical insight into the early church before Jesus Christ, has always been a road block for women. In order to understand the church and how women were oppressed and victimized, one must look at the role women played. Instead of liberation, oppression dominated the fate of women.

In his book, "From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded, Andrew Sung writes;

> In Christian theology, sin is the only category
> we have to diagnosis the wrong of the world.
> We have drawn the map of salvation for sinners
> and have left those who have been sinned against
> to find the way themselves"[30].

Koreans have a term called "Han", which means the deep wounds of victims. "Han is the rupture of the soul, caused by abuse, exploitation, injustice and violence. When the soul is hurt so much, it burst symbolically; it aches. When the aching soul is wounded again by external violence, the victim suffers yet a deeper ache".[31]

Understanding Domestic Violence

"Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in which a person uses coercion, deception, harassment, humiliation, and /or force to establish or maintain power and control over his or her intimate partner. Economic, psychological, physical, sexual and verbal tactics are used by perpetrators to control and obtain power over their partners".[32]

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[30] Andrew Sung Park. From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded. Abington Press. Nashville TN. 2004
[31] Ibid
[32] Al Miles. "Violence in Families." What Every Christian Needs to Know. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press. forthcoming 2002).

Domestic violence crosses ethnic, racial, age, national origin, sexual orientation, religious and socioeconomic lines. The majority of victims of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships are women.[33]

"Most research nowadays agrees that domestic violence is not tied to any specific socio-demographic factor, but that it occurs across all social classes, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and age groups. However, differences may exist in terms of types and presentations of abuse which requires further differentiation and attention to subtle details.[34] " It is characterized by one partner's need to control the other, and the intentional and instrumental use of a range of tactics to secure and maintain that control "[35] Domestic Violence includes behaviors that frighten, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, often injure, and sometimes kill a current or former intimate partner. [36]

Experience with domestic violence and mental abuse has resulted in low self esteem, guilt, and shame for the writer. Several near death experiences caused depression and reclusion from everyday activities. Only necessary obligations forced the writer to keep going and participate in life's expectations. There seemed to be no one or no place to turn to. The stress of being around people caused anxiety, poor health and severe withdrawal. "The laws of physics tell you that if you try to go one place without leaving another, you're in for a pretty sever stretch. And you can only do the splits so long".[37]

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[33] Ibid. pg.43
[34] Jarmia Mildorf. "Storying Domestic Violence: Constructions and Stereotypes of abuse in Discourse of general Practioners." Lincoln NE 2007 Pg 1
[35] Gainey, A& Schechter,S. Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Child Protective Services. San Francisco: Family Violence Prevention Fund. 1996. Pg. 5
[36] Ibid, pg.5
[37] Al Miles. "Violence in the Families" What every Christian needs to Know.(Minneapolis: Augsburg Press. 2002)

"Most intimate partner victimizations are not reported to the police. In one study, only one fifth of all rapes, only one quarter of all physical assaults, and only one-half of all stalking perpetrated against female respondents by intimates were reported to the police".[38]

"According to a report titled "Intimate Partner Violence in the United States" released by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, while the rates of nonfatal intimate partner violence decreased for black females between 1990 and 2003, the rate increased from 3.8 victimization per 1,000 persons age 12 or older in 2003 to 6.6 per 1,000 in 2004." [39] The article goes on to say, "Black females are victimized at a higher rate than white females, and black females report such incidents at a higher rate than white females-68.4 percent compared to 53.5 percent."[40]

Juanita Bynum, one of the country's well known black female ministers, went public with allegations of domestic violence against her husband, Bishop Thomas Weeks III, who faced charges of aggravated assault and making terroristic threats. "Bynum accused Weeks of choking, kicking, and stomping her in a hotel parking lot on August 21, 2007 after the couple failed to reconcile their five year marriage."[41] "The 48 year old has said she intends to file for divorce and plans to draft federal legislation pushing for tougher punishments for abusers."[42]

Historically, the black church has been the rock of the black community, a place of refuge where important issues are addressed. But domestic violence has long been ignored or left off the agenda of most Sunday morning messages. " The Rev. T.D. Jakes, pastor of The Potter's House in Dallas Texas, wrote a statement condemning domestic violence in the wake of

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[38] Tjaden,P., & Thoennes, N. (Extent, Nature, and consequences of Intimate Partner Violence-Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, national Institute of Justice and Census for Disease Control and Prevention. July 2002

[39] http://www.religionnewsblog.com/19324/domestic violence-3 4/2/2010.2:46 A.M.

[40] Ibid

[41] The Flint Journal News Paper. Flint, MI .August 2007. Page 8

[42] Ibid

the Bynum-Weeks incident, which he called "a teaching opportunity."[43] Jakes goes on to say, "The church is the place where people can find redemption even when they have made bad choices or been victims by those who did. He said, the church must do more than offer a place of refuge."[44]

This researcher agrees with Bishop Jakes in offering more than a place of refuge, our pastors, teachers and congregants must have ongoing teaching and training for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. In order for forgiveness and healing to come, knowledge, education, and training is crucial.

Many Christians in abusive situations turn to their church's and pastors for help as a safe place. Some feel loved and accepted unconditionally, others may walk away more deeply wounded. Healing can never take place, if the wounded are never cared for. The impact of domestic violence can wreak havoc on one's spiritual life. It's hard to sit in the household of faith when one is hurting on the inside and, out side. Not only are they abused from the original abuser, but many times abuse comes from the church by the way we preach and teach.

This researcher feels the time is now to address the issues of domestic violence, because it has such an impact on our spiritual relationship with God. This researcher also feels it's our duty as believers to inform and educate people in our congregations regarding the pain of others. If we are to grow spiritually, we need to teach and train people how to deal with relationships . "We can no longer turn a blinded eye when confronted with abusive, angry men and the women who loved them."[45]

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[43] http:// www. Religionnewsblog.com/19324/domestic violence-3.4/2/2010.2:47 A.M.
[44] Ibid
[45] Paul Hegstrom. PhD. Angry Men and the Women Who Love The- Breaking the Cycle of Physical and Emotional Abuse. Missouri. Beacon Hill Press. 199, 2004. Page 124

The scriptures are filled with violence against women, with passages interpreted to confirm male dominance over women: wives be subject to your husband, as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body as which he is the savior. Just as Christ is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22-24)[46]. Either by silence or instruction, the church has too often communicated for battered women to stay in abusive relationships, try to be better wives, and forgive and forget. To batterers, this communication has been justified to control their wives or girlfriends because women are to subject to men in all things. Men have been permitted to discipline their wives and children for the good of the family. "Church fathers like Martin Luther unapologetically described their own physical violence towards their wives.[47]

In dealing with domestic violence, however, the Christian scriptural justification for women remaining in abusive relationships (subordination in marriage, e.g. Ephesians 5:20; prohibition of divorce; e.g. Malachi 2:13-16) must be considered in the fuller context of ethics, theology and doctrine

> "Prooftexting (the selective use of a text, usually out of context, to support one's position) is a common ploy by those who simply seek to justify their actions. It is not difficult to prooftext a man's prerogative to dominate and control a woman within patriarchal western religious traditions. But it nonetheless does not represent the whole story".[48]

Tragically, a critical look at the history of our religious teachings makes clear that religious institutions have implicitly or implicitly shaped the context of values which have tolerated violence against women. "Examples of violence against women appear in many places in

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[46] Ephesians 5:22-24 NRSV
[47] P. Smith. The Life and Letters of Martin Luther. Houghton Miffin Company. Boston, MA. 1999
[48] Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune and Rabbi Cindy G. Enger. Violence Against Women and the Role of Religion. www.vawnet.org. 4/30/2009 1:23 a.m.

authoritative text of our religious traditions. Yet there also exist, persistent sources within our various traditions which, explored and given voice, offer powerful resources for strength and courage, as well as compassion and justice for those who have been harmed by the acts of another in the community".[49]

Phyllis Tribble, a noted feminist, speaks to the violence against women in her book; Text of Terror.[50] Tribble address the situation in which women suffer tremendously under the weight of different kinds of patriarchal and male dominated societal mores. Portions of the Old Testament, noted by Tribble were thought to be dominated by the male society. Her main objective was to reclaim the Bible from those who sought to use it as weapons against women. The Bible is the law of the land for some, and they take the messages given to men inspired by God, to be the guide and direction for their lives. If the Bible holds all truth, where does that leave women who are subjected to male domination?

Another noted feminist, Dr. Lenore Walker has committed to understanding the cycle of Domestic Violence. Dr. Walker has assisted thousands of people in understanding why battered women have such a hard time getting out of a Domestic Violent relationship. Many ask the same question; "why do women stay in battered relationships? If they know their lives are in danger, why don't they leave? If they leave, why do they go back? "It is important to understand why battered women stay in abusive relationships. The court in People Vs Aris 215 Cal app 3d, 264, Cal Rptr 167, 178, (1989) stated that battered women tend to stay in abusive relationship for a number of reasons. Among those reasons:

1. Women are still positively reinforced during the honeymoon phase.

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[49] Rev. Dr Marie Fortune and Rabbi Cindy Enger. Violence Against Women and the Role of Religion. www.vawnet.org. 4/30/2009. 148 a.m.

[50] Phyllis Tribble. Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives. Philadelphia. Fortress press. 1984

2. Women tend to be the peace makers in the relationships. The one's responsible for making the marriage work.
3. Adverse economic consequences.
4. It is more dangerous to leave than to stay.
5. Prior threats by batterer, to kill self or children; or to ascond with children.
6. Lost self esteem
7. No psychological energy to leave
8. Resulting in a learned helplessness or psychological paralysis[51].

The American Psychological Association defines Battered Women as a subgroup of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. rather than a mental Illness.[52]

Battered Women's Syndrome has been used in criminal cases since the late 1970's. Expert's must qualify to testify on this syndrome as they must in any other case.

"Battered Women's Syndrome describes a pattern of psychological and behavioral symptoms found in women living in battering relationships. There are four general characteristics of the syndrome:

1. The woman believes the violence was her fault.
2. The woman has a inability to place the responsibility for the violence elsewhere.
3. The woman fears for life and her children's life.
4. The woman has an irrational belief that the abuser is omnipresent and omniscient".[53]

Research, books, journals, and articles are frequently written to expose the violence against women. The media has given rise to this horrible epidemic that was so long kept in secret. From the beginning of time, women, and especially African American women have endured slavery

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[51] Lori S. Rubenstein. Part of a 1993 Trial Memorandum. www.Legal
[52] Ibid
[53] Lenore Walker. The Battered Women's Syndrome. 1984 p. 95-97

from the slave master, the husband, and even the father. Joann Carson Brown and Rebecca Parker, in their essay " For God So Loved the World," State that Christianity has been a significant influence is shaping the acceptance of abuse. The Central image of Christ on the cross as the savior of the world communicates the message that suffering is redemptive."[54] As we look at domestic violence and sexual assault in times of past and future, we see suffering women who have been treated as servants and sometimes worse than animals.

Paul thought the end of the age and the coming of Christ would come in his lifetime. "It was not surprising that his seven letters showed no interest in church management or household structures. However, over the course of the next two generations, many Christians grew less and less convinced that the second coming was imminent. Thinking it would be sometime before Jesus would return in glory, the churches would have to develop stable organizational structure in order to prosper in the interim.

Most of the letters from the later Pauline traditions include implicit instructions to different members of the instructional Greaco Roman household (husband, wife, children and slaves) and provide list of qualifications and duties of different kinds of church leaders (overseers, deacons, male and female elders, widows and virgins). These list defining the roles of various members of the household and by extention the church, which is viewed a, the house of God are called haustafeln, literally "house tables" or in better English "household" codes "[55]

Tragically, our churches provide numerous examples of dysfunctional families in which abuse has been justified by a distorted interpretation of Paul's household codes. Wifely submission is taken to mean the subjugation of women's whole being to the man, husbandly love is taken to mean the mans condescending care of the woman. The abuse provide by such

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[54] Joanne Carson Brown and Rebecca Parker, For God So Loved The World," essay in Joanne Carson Brown and Carole R. Bohn, Christinaity, Patriarchy and Abuse. (Cleveland:Pilgrim Press,1989).2

[55] Sheila McGinn. The Household Codes of the later Pauline Traditions. Cleveland. OH. 2005

interpretations has led many believers to disregard Paul's teaching as irrelevant and too misogynistic for today's liberated environment.[56]

African American women, who have been victimized, have paid a price to live in a system with patriarchal men and their abuse. "Fundamentally, patriarchy is the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general."[57]

In " Sister's in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk, Delores S. Williams explores, from the time of slavery to our present era, the oppression of African American Women based upon their shared experience regarding race, sex and class. What emerges is a particular Theology-Womanist Theology".[58] While there is much debate on whether or not African American Women should embrace a feministic or womanist theology, many of the modern African American theologians embrace womanist theology as being appropriate for African American women".[59]

Women are frequently discriminated against in playing sports. Although more women are taking active roles in sports, discrimination is still present. When women play and get injured, they are considered as complaining. The stereotypes of women portrayed in sports are manifested in the media, and allocation of funds (gender based). When it comes to women, pay is usually less. As we look at economic crisis that presents itself before the world at this time in 2010, racisms, sexism and classism still exist.

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[56] www.Biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP, 4/23/10,2:40 a.m.
[57] Gerda Lerner. The Creative of Patriarchy (New York: Oxford Press 1986) 239
[58] Delores S. Williams. Sister's In The Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk. New York. Orbiss Books. 1993
[59] Jacqueline Grant. White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989) and Renita Weems, Just A Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible. San Diego, Lura Media, 1988

The Church would seem to be the most likely place women can go and feel appreciated. But instead, many women feel isolated and detached. There are many reasons for this. We could focus on several scriptures that give negative reference to women.

> To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your grief and your suffering in pregnancy and the pangs of childbearing: with spasms of distress you will bring forth children. Yet your desire and craving will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. Genesis 3:16[60]

Looking at this verse, women have lost their rights, their identity, and motherhood became a curse degrading their status.

Another scripture;

> 11. Let a woman learn in quietness, in entire submissiveness.
> 12. I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to remain in quietness and keep silence(in religious assemblies.
> 13. For Adam was first formed then Eve.
> 14. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but woman who was deceived and deluded and fell into transgression. [61]

Writings such as this, prompted 19th century feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton to write: "The Bible and the Church have been the greatest stumbling blocks in the way of woman's emancipation.[62] Various churches have fought against women in position, opposing everything from speaking in public, holding high positions, and even in some, to where they sit. Many have become anesthetized to the elevation of women in the church.

> "Today the most organized and formidable opponent of women's social, economic, and sexual rights remains organized religion.[63]

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[60] The Amplified Bible
[61] Ibid 1Timothy 2:11-14
[62] Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Women's Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective. Dover Publishing Inc.
[63] http:// www.ffrf.org/nontracts/women.php. Why Women Need Freedom From Religion. 4/30/2009. 3:14 a.m.

Religious fanatics are constantly fighting against women who have abortions and the medical staff which serve them. This writer is not saying whether it is right or wrong to have an abortion, but the right to make a personal choice is not the decision of others.

Why do women remain second class citizens? Why is there religion fostered war against women's rights? If we read the Bible, we will understand why" the bible is a handbook for the subjugation of women".[64] Various forms of discrimination and violence against females take place around the globe, behind the scenes, behind closed walls, closed doors and many times in the sight of public domain. In patriarchal societies, as well as liberal ones, millions of women are forced to deal with different forms of discrimination and abuse at their work place and in their homes.

"Sometimes men install glass ceilings to separate women, which prevent them from moving up in their careers. Sometimes it manifest through salaries with women being paid less than men. At other times, it takes the form of physical or psychological abuse. Discriminatory laws and social norms which gives preference to men in different fields also reduce women[65] to the statue of "second class citizens"

The Bible established women's inferior status, her uncleanliness, her transgressions and God-ordained master/servant relationship to man. Biblical women were possessions: fathers owned them, sold them into bondage and even sacrificed them. The bible sanctioned rape during war time and any other time.

This is not what God wants for his people, whether male or female. Women are precious in the sight of God, and are to be treated as so.

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[64] http:// www.ffrt.org/nontracts/women.php. Why Women Need Freedom From Religion. 4/30/2009. 3:14 a.m.

[65] Jumana Al Tamini Gulf News August 2008

In order for healing to come in the body of Christ, the male ministers, preachers, and Elders must respect everyone from the pulpit. Many mis-use scripture to benefit their selfish ego, but in order for women of domestic violence or any hurting person to forgive and heal, we all must do a better job in treating the servants of God. In our church, we must create a community where women can come together and be able to release the hurt and pain of the past. We must do a better job of creating a safe place where healing can take place.

We Need to do a better Job.

Biblical Foundation

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matt. 5:14

Anyone who has been victimized by sexual abuse, childhood abuse, crime, church hurt, and more, must make a choice whether to forgive the perpetrator (s) or not. Many have gone for years carrying the hurt and pain of unforgiveness with no healing in sight. Holding on to anger, resentment, bitterness, and sometimes hate may block healing.

Forgiveness may be a problem because many are not sure what forgiveness really is. For some, the only thing they recognize is vengeance. But if you can't let go of your desire for vengeance, you will never find true healing, and you can never be truly healed.

Cynthia Ransley in her book, Forgivness and the Healing Process, states;

> "Forgiveness is love practiced among people who do not behave perfectly. When we forgive we consciously release from our judgment the person who has hurt us. However fair and justified our anger may be, we leave it behind. We in the great family of humanity need to forgive and be forgiven everyday. When we forgive those who have damaged us personally, we imitate God or act on the divine within us) and thus participate in this mystery of divine love. We release ourselves from the corrosive burdens of hostility. The ability to forgive puts us on secure ground in our own relationship with the Lord". [66]

Forgiving may not be easy, but as we release the pain of hurt and anger, we release ourselves from those burdens of hostility that consume our thoughts and energy. We release the desire for vengeance, as stated above. And doing all this will help bring us closer to God.

John Castle, in his book, Domestic Violence in the Church states: "Paul in writing to Titus a missive counsel advised his protégé to teach the biblical believers in Crete, to speak evil of no

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[66] Cynthia Ransley, Terri Spy. Forgiveness and the Healing Process: A Central Therapeutic Concern. Brunner-Routledge. Hove, England. 2004

one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all men. This teaching has practicality for many of life's situations, and the Biblical home should be the primary repository of the behavior found in this teaching. But is it?"[67] Until recently, the Christian community has lived in denial that domestic crime and brutality could be present in their congregations. After all, we have been taught from the pages of the Holy Writ that if a women submits to her husband, or a man, sacrificially loves his wife, all will be well in "Domestic Tranquility Baptist Church"[68]

Castle goes on to say, "But this Pollyanna perspective forgets another Biblical doctrine, the existence of evil. Evil doesn't reside just in the heart of a slobbering rapist lurking on a dark street corner, but it's also resident in the homes of some of our respected church members and leaders."[69]

> "Forgiving means overcoming resentment and can therefore be understood as a change in outlook rather than a change in behavior. Shedding resentment is certainly not easy; actually to forgive means to exhaust in one's own being the consequences one has suffered so that those consequences will not cause further damage that is psychology, social or even financial".[70]

This researcher believes, a person caught up with denial may experience anger and resentment even though they express forgiveness. They can be extremely frustrated because unconscious resentment is essentially invisible to logic and reason. Because they represent things people would rather not see.

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[67] John P. Castle. Domestic Violence and the Church. LaMesa,CA .November 6, 2002
[68] Ibid, 1
[69] Ibid, 1
[70] Cynthia Ransley. Terri Spy. Forgiveness and the Healing Process: A Central Therapeutic Concern. Brunner Routledge. Hove, England. 2004

The Lord's Prayer

God's love and forgiveness is the central offering to Christians. Forgiveness is then a responsibility, and a way of being open to God's love. This is epitomized in the Lord's prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us". Jesus continues with the instruction, "But if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you forgive not their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.[71]

The mode for Christian prayer in Mathew 6 is known as the Lord's Prayer. Many of us have recited this prayer for years, and we have even taught it to our children, but we have never meditated on its meaning.

Biblical scholars disagree about Jesus' meaning in the Lord's Prayer. Some view it as "existential," referring to mans' present experiences on earth, while others interpret it as exchatological, referring to the coming Kingdom of God. The prayer lends itself to both interpretations, and further questions are proposed by the existence of other translations and the problems inherent in the process of translations.

Cain Hope Felder speaks about the Lords prayer in Matthew 6 from the perspective of the kingdom. "He speaks of this writing as apocalyptic writing and agrees with Ernest Kasermann that apocalyptic is the mother of Christian theology. Felder states, 'at the center of that apocalyptic is an anthropology of hope. This hope is in a transformed created order that anticipates the Kingdom of God on earth. "Thy will be done, as it is in heaven" reads one of the petitions in the Lords prayer." (Matt 6:10)[72]

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[71] Ibid

[72] Cain Hope Felder. Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and family. Orbis books, Maryknoll, NY 1989

Lets look at forgiveness and examine what we really mean. According to H.L. Bruce, in Spiritual Ethics. "There are seven words in the scripture which denotes the ides of forgiveness. three in the Hebrew and four in the Greek. In the Hebrew Old Testament they are "kapar, "to cover" "nasa". to bear. take away guilt. and "salah". to pardon. "Nasa" is used in both human and divine forgives. The other two,"kapar" and "salah" are only used in divine forgiveness. In the Greek New Testament the words are "apolyein" "charizesthal" "aphesis" and "paresis."[73] Bruce also states "The most common New Testament word for forgiveness is "aphesis." It conveys the ides of "sending away" or "letting go." The noun occurs fifteen times. The verb with the same meaning is used about forty times". [74]

If we can understand the words "letting go", it would help us to allow forgiveness to release the pain and hurt we carry within our hearts and minds. Forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment and anger and even the thoughts of revenge. Holding on to these feelings brings consequences to our minds and bodies. Some of those consequences can be stress, lack of energy and even heart problems. This understanding of forgiveness is especially important for interpretation of the Lord's Prayer.

"When we ask God to forgive our debts or sins, we are asking him to complete the work of forgiveness that he began through Jesus' own ministry."[75]

Harner states:

> God forgives us on his own, graciously and unconditionally, but he expects us also to forgive those who have sinned against us. [76]

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[73] H.L. Bruce. Scriptural Forgiveness Ethics. Ontario, California.
[74] Walter Ewell. Baker's Theological Dictionary. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, Michigan. 196
[75] Phillip B. Harner. Understanding the Lord's Prayer. Fortress Press. Philadelphia. 1975
[76] Ibid

"The same words are used in Deut. 15:2 for the cancellation of debts, and lending. The word hamartia, "sin" does not occur here.

It is used in a legal sense, to forgive a debt. In Deut, it means to cancel a loan (debt) or remit a change. The word "loans" is used for loans or monetary debts in the Greek Language. The quote from the famous historian Thucydides 2:40 shows his use of the word: It will be more like paying back a loan than giving something spontaneously"[77]

In prayer, we assure God we are ready to do this when we turn to him. This researcher understands this is a process, and understands if we don't forgive, our heavenly father will not forgive us. The process has not been easy for women that have been abused. Forgiving abusers may be one of the hardest things for them to do. No matter how hard one tries to forget the hurt and pain, it seems to surface when we least expect it. A certain place, a certain smell, or seeing someone that looks like the abuser may cause a set back. Therefore, forgiving is a process, and going through the process may take time. Victims may need help to get and through the process, what better place to go, than the church. Leaders may start with preaching forgiveness, and what better way to preach or teach one to forgive by speaking the Lord's Prayer.

Like the prayer for forgiveness, the reference to a man's own forgiveness of debtors has some parallels in Jewish writings. "Jesus Sirach exhorts (28:2): Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray, and this admonition is explained with various illustrations which seem to anticipate the parable of the unmerciful servant."[78]

Harner states:

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[77] Dr. A. Nyland . The Source New Testament :With Extensive Notes on Greek Word Meaning, Smith and Stirling Publishing, Australia. 2004

[78] Ibid

> The Lord's Prayer reflects the same complete structure of thought as the parable of the unmerited servant. "The address abba "Fatehr" signifies that God accepts men as his children and brings them into a new relationship with himself. In this way the address itself indicates the divine forgiveness precedes human forgiveness. This new relationship with God enables men to ask for god's forgiveness, and it also enables them to practice forgiveness toward one another. In this same sense, human forgiveness is a reflection of God's forgiveness. The close connection between the two kinds of forgiveness and the emphasis on the human forgiveness as something that actually takes place, indicates that God's forgiveness can become real only when men accept it and express it by forgiving one another.[79]

The address *abba* at the beginning of the prayer corresponds to this aspect of forgiveness, for it indicates that God graciously brings men into a new relationship with himself and thus offers them forgiveness. Jesus stressed that men must be willing to forgive one another.

This brings us to another thought. If one is not forgiving of others does it mean the Father will not forgive them? Jesus is teaching disciples how to pray, and in doing so, outlines how we are not restored into intimacy with God whenever we have displeased Him. Jesus instructs us as we pray, to forgive others as He has forgiven us. If there are those we have not forgiven when we pray for forgiveness, we are asking God not to restore our relationship with Him and therefore our sins are not forgiven. The Greek word "*aphiemi*" means "forgive", but if you do hold peoples mistakes against them, then your Father will hold your mistakes against you."[80]

If we have unforgiveness in our hearts against someone else, then we are acting in a way that is not pleasing to God, making our prayers and a proper relationship with Him difficult. "We cannot possibly walk with God in true fellowship if we refuse to forgive others".[81] We should

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[79] Ibid
[80] The Source New testament: With Extensive Notes on Greek Word Meaning, Translated with notes by Dr. A Nylan 2004 Smith and Stirling Publishing, Australia
[81] Peter Kreft. Making Sense out of Suffering. Cincinnati, OH: Servants Books, 1986

know that we are not perfect and understand that we need to pray for forgivness as we continue to live in this world.

In the miracle of the paralyzed man, Jesus surprised those present by saying to him "My Son, your sins are forgiven". Some of the scribes were concerned by this and said who can forgive sins but God alone? Jesus heals the man by saying it is no more difficult for the Son of Man to forgive than to heal. Jesus shows He is the Son of God and extends the right of human beings to forgive. "Christianity is based on the belief that Jesus is the Son of God-and is God-has the authority to forgive sins and heal the sick and has unlimited understanding of human beings". [82]

Speaking to the punishment of the woman found in adultery, Jesus utters, 'let he who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her'. Jesus confronts the accusers, and, as the one sinless person forbears from throwing the stone. He goes a step beyond the law and shows mercy and the nature of undeserved love." Jesus suffered, years of persecution, the solitude on the mountain, the agonies on the cross, with the power of a God to sustain him? But, he was unable and alone to triump over all human weakness, trials and temptation, was victory not only for Jesus but for every human being made in his image."[83]

As Christians, we may endure many hardships, many trials and temptations, and years of suffering and persecutions, but if we can remember Jesus suffered on the cross for our sakes, and because of His suffering, we will have victory in our lives.

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[82] Cynthia Ransley, Terri Spy. Forgiveness and the Healing Process: A Central Therapeutic Concern. Brunner-Routledge. Hove, England 2004

[83] Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The Woman's Bible, Northeastern University Press, Boston. 1993

'It is in the ancient pages of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament where the concept of interpersonal forgiveness first finds its shape."[84] From the story of Joseph forgiving his brothers to the forgiveness demonstrated by the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son the scriptures paint a picture of forgiveness relevant not only in the divine-human relationship, but also in person-person relationships. This interpersonal nature is spelled out more explicitly in Pauline thought, where Christ's followers are urged, in their desire to pursue holy communal living, to forgive one another because they themselves had been forgiven by God through Christ. " The essence of a forgiving response is the cessation of resentment and the implementation or the resumption of a beneficial response toward an offender."[85]

In their book, Helping clients forgive: An Empirical guide for resolving anger and restoring hope, Robert Enright and R.P. Fitzgibbons define forgiveness as follows:
'People, upon rationally determining that they have been unfairly treated, forgive when they willfully abandon resentment and related responses (to which they have a right), and endeavor to respond to the wrongdoer based on the moral principle of beneficence, which may include compassion, unconditional worth, generosity, and moral love to which the wrongdoer, by nature of the hurtful act or acts, has no right."[86]
Enright also states, "To forgive is not to condone, excuse, forget, or even to reconcile, but to forgive is to offer mercy to someone who has acted unjustly."[87]

Unlike Judaism, Christian forgiveness does not depend on repentance of the wrongdoer. This was epitomized by the last words of Christ on the cross, Father forgive them for they know

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[84] R.D. Enright. The Church as Forgiving Community; An Initial Model. APA Brooks Magination Press. Washinton D.C. 2004
[85] Robert D. Enright. Rising Above The Storm Clouds. APA Brooks Magination Press. Washington, D.C. 2004
[86] R.D. Enright and R.P. Fitzgibbons. Helping clients forgive: An empirical guide for resolving anger and restoring hope. Washington, D.C. 2000
[87] Ibid

not what they do. Genuine forgiveness can lead the sinner to understand their wrongdoing and repent. Repentance is seen not so much as a precursor of forgiveness as in the Jewish tradition, but as a crucial step in the direction of becoming a member of the kingdom of God (Worthington 1999).[88]

Forgiveness is a Benefit.

Exploring the benefits of forgiveness encourages one to feel better about them. Self esteem will be higher because attitudes will be healthy and positive. M. Bauer states:

> Forgiveness is not meant for the abuser but for the survivor who realizes that hate is self destructive.[89]

She points to the damage of resentment and bitterness towards others and what it can do to all involved. This researcher has experienced resentment and bitterness, towards the perpetrator, which caused low self esteem, and until forgiveness within the heart was initiated, the researcher was bitter. Forgiveness can offer a sense of peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Only God can give this kind of peace, not the world. Understanding this principle will enable one to have peace within, which releases the heart from stress. Forgiveness moves us from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Another benefit from forgiving others is being able to communicate. Healing will not come if we are unable or unwilling to communicate. During the period of resentment and bitterness, many find themselves walking around like a time bomb. At any given moment, the bomb will explode. There has to be a way one can find complete healing from the abuse of life. The wounded and broken hearted, seek refuge in the church, but the church has not taken the steps to advocate for victims of domestic violence, or any other hurt for that matter.

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[88] M.E. McCullough. E.L. Worthington. Religion and the Forgiving Personality. 67:6 1999
[89] M. Baures. Letting go of bitterness and hate. Journal of Human Psychology 36 (1):75-90. 1999

Repeating the phrase "forgive and forget" is not as easy as one pretends it may be. Forgetting in psychological language is called repression. "Forgiveness is a decision of the will. Since God commands us to forgive, we must make a conscious choice to forgive. This frees the forgiving one from the past. The offender may not desire forgiveness and may not change. Ideally, the offender will seek reconciliation, but if not, the wronged one should still make known his decision to forgive".[90]

This researcher believes God is calling the church to remove the banner of submission and replace it with transformation. It's time to allow women to be transformed from hurt and pain to forgiving and healing. The church must promote total healing in order for victims to feel safe. In order for this to happen, the church must provide trained counselors and a professional staff equipped to handle the wounded when they come. The pathway to healing will never come if the church never address the issues of the hurt and wounded.

It is not easy to forget when injustice has been committed against us. We cannot push the delete button and act like nothing has ever happened. The bible tells us God remembers our sins no more. (Hebrews 8:12) God knows that we have sinned and come short of His glory. (Romans 3:23) But He has forgiven us and treats us as if we have never sinned. We this in mind, we must forgive and forget If we forgive someone, we must act like it never happened. Even though we read this scripture and understand what is being said, this researcher feels it's a process. Arriving to this point in life, may not be easy for some, and therefore the journey to healing may take longer to reach.

Before anything can be done, we must first acknowledge the violence is real. We must address this situation from the pulpit and affirm the feelings of the injured. But just preaching a sermon is not enough. Until we teach, train and have a safe place of refuge,

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[90] Hope Edelman, Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss, New York: Addison Wesley Publishing Co. 1995

domestic violence and sexual assault will continue to dominate the minds and hearts of many sitting in the pew. We have a responsibility to the person sitting in the church to offer compassion and love. Through this act of kindness, many will experience forgiveness and the pathway to healing.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Victims are in need of someone to help them resolve some of these questions.

> Where is God in the midst of all my suffering?
> Has God given up on me?
> Doesn't God care?
> What did I do to deserve this?
> Am I a bad person, there is no hope for me
> Is God trying to teach me a lesson through all my suffering?
> Will I be condemned to hell if I get divorce.
> How can I ever face people in the church?
> If I leave my husband, will my children forgive me?
> Can I still sing on the praise team if I get a divorce?[91]

As a survivor of domestic violence, this researcher asked the above questions while sitting in the pews every Sunday morning. Not only was there no one to talk to, but there was no place to address questions that could help alleviate unfogiveness towards the abuser. This researcher was dealing with hurt from the violence in the home, past hurts from childhood and recent hurts from the church.

Joy Bussert states in her book, Battered Women; From a Theology of suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment that we must challenge the religious fundamentals in order to change .

She states:

> We must challenge the rhetoric of the religious right that seeks to presence an out moded notion of the hierarchal family, keeping women and men locked into a potentially violent cultural pattern and preventing the emergence of models for Christian relationships based on mutually, reciprocity, and wholeness. We must brake down cultural sex role stereotyping and make possible friendships between

[91] Ibid,47

> girls and boys, women and men that are free of dualistic and hierarchal overtones and shaped according to the biblical concept of wholeness. Such an effort must vision not only theological reconstruction in our church but a world in which social and economic equality of the sexes become reality. [92]

We are living in a day where times have changed in many ways, such as technology, science, and the political movement. The status for women relative to men from biblical times has even changed. Women have been granted by law, rights and privileges that have been traditionally exclusive for men. Women have a voice and vote in every public arena, even the highest court in the land, the Supreme Court. They have access to education in all fields, open doors in all occupations and every profession.

Women have distinguished themselves as executives, scientist, authors, administrators, researchers, pilots, physicians, and much more. For the first time in human history, women have achieved equality and relative parity with men in virtually every area of society, except the church! The church remains, with few exceptions, the largest institution of discrimination against women.

Women continue to be locked out of the priesthood and positions of authority when it comes to the church. Few denominations have ordained women as pastors or bishops, and even then, they remain under the leadership of men.

This researcher has been affiliated with the Church of God in Christ for over forty eight years, and never in the one hundred year had history had this denomination allowed women to elevate above the position of evangelist. Women have been allowed to teach Sunday school, sit on the mother's board, be president of the usher board, and even president of the kitchen

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[92] Joy Bussert Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment.(Division for mission in North America, Lutheran Church in America 1986), 78.

committee, but they are not allowed to become anything else. The Church of God in Christ, (COGIC) is one of the largest Black Pentecostal denominations in existence, "has taken a firm policy stand against the full ordination of women as clergy. Although COGIC has recognized the numerous contributions that women have made in the affairs of the church, COGIC's Official Manual argues on scriptural grounds on ordaining women as elder, bishop or pastor."[93] Although it has recognized that women were important in the ministry of the New Testament era, the denomination has found no mandate for ordaining women. COGIC has allowed women to preach in our churches, but only as evangelist and missionaries, performing a teaching function that does not carry a mandate for ordination.

"Many Pentecostal churches are Kin-Type churches. While property churches are common among the Baptists where the congregation owns the church property, the mixed polity of COGIC has permitted the development of Kin-type Churches, which are often not only named after the founder but also passed on in the extended family. While COGIC is a connectional church with a hierarchal structure of bishops and strict denominational ties, the denomination also encourages its clergy to found and develop their own churches in the manner of the churches having an independent polity like the Baptists. In spite of its official policy of prohibiting women pastors, there seems to be a tacit understanding in the denomination which quietly tolerates such situations by allowing the women to complete the ministry of her husband as *shepherd sans portfolio*."[94]

This researcher has found this practice disturbing because of her relationship and understanding of God. Romans 2: 11 states God is no respect of person. Galatians 3:27,28 says, "there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female, for all of you are one in

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[93] Church COGIC Manual. Editorial Commission. Page 144-46
[94] Lawerence H Mamiya. The Black Church in the African –American Experience. Durham, NC. 1990

Christ" To my understanding of these scriptures, God has not discriminated against me. No one can change the minds and hearts of others, but no one will be allowed to make gender discrimination a part of this researchers life.

Gender discrimination in the church continues today in many churches, and is defended on biblical grounds. The hierarchy of male domination and female subordination is given support in Paul's command to the churches at Ephesus and Colossae: Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians 5:22-23, Colossians 3:18.

Where does this type of teaching fit in with regards to domestic violence? With this type of teaching, where will abused victims go for help or healing for their pain?
This researcher strongly believes the church can be a place of healing, but only if the leadership is willing to practice theological recon structuring.

Elizabeth Howell Verdesi published a book entitled, "In but Still Out. In it", she concludes that "while women have achieved ecclesiastical equality and have been given significant responsibility in both lay and clergy roles, they are still marginalized." [95] If the church is "out", victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are left out because of the hierarchal overtone. Counseling victims may be biased if the pastor is expecting women to keep silent in the church, or in the home.

In her book, Calling the Church to Account, Mercy Oduyoye states:

> "As with class and race, on issues of gender discrimination, the church seems to align itself with forces that question the true humanity of the other, and, at times, seems actually to find ways of justifying the oppression or marginalized of the other."[96]

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[95] Elizabeth Howell Verdesi. In But Still Out. Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 1973
[96] Mercy Oduyoye. Calling the Church to Account: African Women and Liberation . The Ecumenical Review.

She also states:

> "Must the Church continue to base its theology on an alien terminology, using outdated exegitacal methods that enthrone an uncritical use of biblical texts against women."[97]

This researcher believes the church must be held accountable for the relationship of women and suppression. In order for the community of women to heal from victimization of all abuse, injustice of discrimination must cease.

Delores S. Williams is Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary New York, and in her book, Sister's in the Wilderness, Dr. Williams addresses women in the church. She makes it clear; there is a distinction between The Black Church and African American denominational church's. She states:

"To speak of the African American denominational church as the black church suggests a unity among the denominations that does not exist."[98] She goes on to say; The fallacious merging of the black church and African American denominational churches hides a multitude of sins against the black women prevalent in the African American denominational churches on a daily basis. This researcher will list a few:

1. The sexism that denies black women equal opportunity in the churches'. Such action opposes God by denying God's call to black women to preach.
2. Collision that often exists between some black male preachers and the political forces in America opposing women and all black people.
3. The sexual exploitation of black women in the denominational churches by some preachers.
4. The emotional exploitation of black female parishioners as ministers provoke emotional reactions to proclamations and ministry rather than thoughtful questions and responses."[99]

Vol. 47 4. 1995. Page 479+

[97] Ibid . Page 479

[98] Delores S. Williams. Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk. Orbiss Books. Maryknoll, New York. 1993

[99] Ibid, Pages 208-209

Williams also mentioned that not all African American denominational churches have exploited women and that some are providing outstanding work. But there are those that continue to use sexism against women in our churches.

This researcher agrees with the author that sexism exist in our church. The church has not embraced women in ministry. Some women have experienced "floor ministries", meaning they have been asked to preach (some say teach) from the floor, instead of the pulpit. Some male preachers don't believe women are called to preach, and therefore will not allow women in "their" pulpit. Even though a few male preachers have repented and asked for forgiveness from God and women for their actions, many have not given second thoughts of their actions or behavior.

"The sin of sexism dies slowly in some African American denominational structures and hangs on tenaciously in others."[100] Some women have been told, "they are not preachers" and when speaking, have been addressed as "teachers." Fortunately, these women understand and know who called them to the ministry and have not backed down from their calling.

In her book, Williams also stated: "Regardless of the positive features in African American denominational churches, there are questions about black women to which the church needs to respond."[101] Such questions as:

1. What is being done in the churches to motivate self love and self esteem among black women?
2. How many times does the preachers' sermon have as its subject the oppression prevailing in the black community- especially the oppression of black women?

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[100] Ibid pg 207

[101]

3. How many times does the preacher address the sexual and emotional exploitation of black women by black men?
4. How many times has domestic violence been the subject of the sermon?
5. How many times does the preacher's sermon tell black men to erase white aesthetic values from their minds and love and respect black skinned, broad nosed, beautiful black women who look like black women?[102]

These and other questions are probably on the minds of many black women as they enter our church on Sunday morning. It is not hard to understand why women have a hard time with unforgiveness and healing in our church. The church has not been a safe place for victims of domestic violence. Nor has it been a safe place for the wounded of many other hurts that women encounter. This researcher can now understand why she and so many like her took so long to heal. If women feel powerless and like second class citizens, they will never be able to forgive and have a pathway to healing, and they will never be free.

"W. E.B. Du Bois, who on occasion spoke about women's need for freedom, believed that black women should abide by the status quo-rule:" men are primary wage earners and women and mother's are keepers of the home." [103] If any women read this quote and feel like this researcher, I am sure the question comes to mind, How dare you? This researcher is in total disagreement with Mr. Du Bois, and feels violated at the suggestion of such. In an address to women at Spellman College, Mr. Du Bois said "black people would not advance like virile races of the world, unless the Negro women… are prepared to assume the responsibility of healthy families, of two or three children."[104]Mr. Du Bois didn't believe women should have a place in

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[102] Ibid, Page 214
[103] Ibid, page 214
[104] W. E. B. Du Bois. "The Work of Negro Women in Society" in W.E.B. Du Bois: Writings in Periodical Edited by

politics and civil rights struggle because it was to be controlled by men only. With all due respect to Mr. Du Bois in his contributions to African Americans, this researcher feels his affirmation of the subordination of women was just as unhealthy as some of his male counterparts. If the church continues this abuse towards women, and allowed to get away with it, women will never get out of their seats.

James Henry Harris, pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Norfolk Virginia and adjunct assistant professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University wrote in his article;

> "Sexism against black women should also be addressed by black theology and the black church. Women in black churches outnumber men by more than two to one; yet in positions of authority and responsibility the ration is reversed. Though women are gradually entering ministry as bishops, pastors, deacons and elders, many men and women still resist and fear that development."[105]

He goes on to say when his church licensed a woman to the preaching ministry over a decade ago;

> 'Almost all the male deacons and many women members opposed the action by appealing to tradition and selected Scripture passages. Black theology and the Black church must deal with the double bondage of black women in church and society."[106]

Harris suggested two ways for black women to deal with this bondage;

1. Treat black women with the same respect as men. This means that women who are qualified for ministry must be given the same opportunities as me to become pastors and to serve in such leadership positions as deacons, stewards, trustee, etc.

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[105] James Henry Harris. Practicing Liberation in the Black Church. Christian Century Foundation. Christian Century. June 13-20 1990

[106] Ibid page 1

2. Theology and church must eliminate exclusion language , attitudes or practice, however benign or unintended, in order to benefit fully from the talents of women."[107]

Black women in the ministry not only have to endure sexism and subordination from males, they have to endure criticism and negative responses from other women. One would think women would be more supportive to other women, since they to have been subjected to the same treatment as their sisters in Christ. Many women preachers, (not teachers) such as Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis, Bishop Vashti McKinsey, Bishop Millicent Hunter, Bishop Claudette Copeland, and more, have encountered almost as much resistance from women as they have from men. Women have made statements, "no woman can pastor me" or, "women are not as smart as men" and "the bible says, the men are the head." In some case, women have told the female pastor they need a covering from a man in order to be blessed." Some women have been so traditionalized and traumatized from male domination, they are not aware of their own stance against female preachers.

Controversy for ordination of women has existed since the 1800's. "The first black denomination to officially ordain women to the ministry was the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. In 1891 at the Second Ecumenical Conference Bishop James Walker Hood defended the right of women to be elected delegates to the general conference of the denomination. He said that there is one Methodist Episcopal Church that guarantees to women all rights in common with men"[108]

"Several years later, he acted on his words. At the Seventy-Third Session of the New York Annual Conference held at Catherine Street Zion A.M.E. Church, Bishop Hood ordained Mrs. Julia A. Foote "deacon." On May 19, 1895 Bishop Alexander ordained Mrs. Mary J. Small

[107] Ibid, page 1
[108] Hart M. Neilson, Anne Kusener Neilson. Black Church in the sixties

as "deacon", and later in 1898, Mrs. Small was the first woman to be ordained as Elder in the Methodist church."[109] Although full ordination didn't take place until 1948, Black women made their mark as the beginning of a new era. Attitudes regarding women in the ministry still exist in the church, but women who have been called by God keep pushing until something happens. Bishop Vashti McKenzie pushed until something happened. Bishop McKenzie made history as "the first female bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), and in her current role as the first female president of the Churches' Council of Bishops, the executive branch for its operations world wide."[110] As the first woman ever elected as bishop in the AME church she said, "she wants to be remembered as one who opened the door of church leadership to black Christian women around the world."[111]

The Archbishop of Wales, Dr. Barry Morgan said why he will be saying yes to the consecration of women as Bishop said;

"At the heart of the Christian Gospel are values to do with integrity, justice, wholeness, inclusion. In Christ there is no bond or free, male or female, Jew or Greek. How therefore, can a church, which claims to set people free, treat all as equal yet refuse the possibility of considering whether women can be called to the Episcopate? The crucified and risen Christ represents the whole of humanity-women as well as men. Were that not so, women would not be redeemed by Him. But if that is so, it follows that women as well as men, should represent Christ in this particular office if they are called to do so. The theological question is not can a woman preacher

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[109] Lawrence H.Mamiya. The Black Church in the African American Experience. Duke University Press. Durham, NC 1990 page 285

[110] American Program Bureau, 313 Washington St Suite 2251. Newton Massachusettes

[111] Ibid, page1

represent a male redeemer? But can an exclusively male priesthood represent human redeemer since both men and women are saved by Jesus Christ?"[112]

This researcher understands the Black church must be a place of refuge for the broken, but before this can take place, the Christian community must recognize the bondage put on Black women and their role in the church. The struggles of the women in Biblical times to the present have been that of rejection, humiliation, and abusive power. Male pastors, and leaders, have used the scripture as weapons to keep women in the church in submission. Women must be able to have a place to go and be empowered spiritually, physically, and mentally. If women are treated fair and equally, what better place to go than the church?

[112] Dr. Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales on why he will be saying yes to the consecration of women as Bishop. March 29, 2008 Page 6

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methods and procedures of the research used to understand the impact of hurt and pain of survivors and victims of Domestic Violence experiencing unforgivness and healing. The problem of this research is to provide resources and education for a caring community in the church to move from bondage to freedom in their life. Action research was chosen for this project because it is conducted by the researcher in collaboration with context associates to bring about increased knowledge and desired change in the lives of the hurting.

Research Design

The researcher used Qualitative analysis, which included interviews, observations, and evaluations for data collections. The qualitative contribution is critical ethnography in which "ethnographers attempt to aid emancipator goals, negate repressive influences, raise consciousness, and invoke a call to action that potentially will lead to social change"[113] Two three hour workshops were developed at the church to increase the knowledge and educate individuals of the pain and suffering incurred from domestic violence and sexual assault.

The ministry focus was to create a community within the church for victims and survivors of abuse to be able to address unforgiveness and healing. As a survivor of domestic violence, the researcher experienced coming to the church and not able to release the inner hurt and pain. Many have been taught to keep personal matters to themselves; therefore, you never discuss abuse in the church. And even if you did, who would you go to? Talking to the pastor may be your only release, but what happens after that? Abuse is not addressed from the pulpit, nor is it

[113] John Croswell. Research Design: Qualitative & Quantative Approaches (Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage Publication, 1994),11-12

addressed in most Sunday school sessions. The researcher felt isolated and alone, with no way of escape. Unfortunately, the silence caused even more hurt and pain, and the researcher continued to withdraw from others in the church.

In his book, Victory over suffering, A. Graham Ikin states, "to over come hurt, we must have the courage to take risks and talk about what really hurts us."[114] But what happens when there is no place to go or no one to talk to? Domestic Violence and sexual assault is rarely discussed in most congregations, and because the researcher has been united with the Church of God in Christ, most of her life, she is well acquainted with the doctrine of the church. This particular denomination believes in being married to one person, and men are the head of the household.

Understanding the teachings of the Church of God in Christ, allowed the researcher to create a community within the church, to assist with unforgiveness, inner hurt and pain. The Official Manual for the Church of God in Christ addresses Social Welfare problems, such as, problems of poverty, unemployment, broken homes, mental and emotional handicaps, divorcees and more[115]. But no where in the manual will you find mention of rape, sexual assault, forgiveness or healing. The manual even speaks to having a "Social Service and counseling Service made available by the Church on a Jurisdictional level to families of our churches who have marital problems, a need for Planned Parenthood information, medical information and even unwed mother information"[116]. But after all the programs are put in place, we still have nothing regarding forgiveness and healing, or a place of safety for domestic violence and it's victims.

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[114] A. Graham Ikin, Victory Over Suffering-Glimpses into a Mystery. Channel Press Inc. Great Neck, New York. 1961

[115] Church of God in Christ Inc. Official Manual. Board of Publication of the Church of God in Christ. Memphis, TN. 1992

[116] Ibid, page 127

Dr. Katherine Piderman, in her essay, states, "The power of forgiveness is enormous. When we practice forgiveness we take a proactive role in our happiness by relinquishing the control and power the offending person and situation have had in our lives."[117] The researcher agrees with Ms. Piederman, we must take a proactive role in our happiness. Power and control should come from within, If not, we become "stuck" and cannot heal. In order for one to move to the next level, a carrying community must exist to assist with the healing of the wounded.

Objectives

After discussion and approval from the pastor, the researcher presented two workshops that would provide education and resources for survivors and victims of domestic violence. The long term objective of the workshop is to find pathways of forgiveness and healing. The short term goal is to create a safe place for survivors to come and talk about it.

Instructional Model

Two three hour sessions comprised the ministry model. Sessions involved varying combinations of lively discussion, demonstrations, group discussions and audio visual aids. The short discussions were used to convey specific information and to explain concepts. Small group discussions allowed the participants to engage in dialogue with each other and share experiences. The large group discussion permitted a wider exchange of thoughts and feelings. The audio/visual aides were used to explain concepts, provoke discussion, and increase awareness. The complete curriculum containing session topics, objectives, reference materials, resources, and pages for notes were given to all participants at the beginning of session one.

Participants

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[117] Katherine M. Piderman. Forgiveness: How to let go of Grudges and Bitterness. Rochester, Minnesota. Mayo Clinic

The invitation was extended to anyone that wanted to participate. Pastors and leaders were encouraged to come as well. Understanding the silence of domestic violence and the hidden secrets was the beginning of forgiveness and healing for those that wanted to begin the process.

Procedure for participation in Workshops

The researcher invited and paid for her Context Associates to have breakfast. Contact was made by the researcher to all Context Associates to meet for breakfast. During the breakfast/ meeting, the researcher gave the purpose of the meeting and expectations of the workshop. The associates shared ideas with the researcher for participation of the workshop.

The researcher asked each associate to present a workshop dealing with unforgivness and healing. Discussion centered on topics of the workshop and the target audience. It was decided to initiate a survey to members in the church. The researcher asked each associate to come up with 3 questions to make up the survey, which would be distributed during Sunday morning service. Each associate was also asked to come up with a topic for their perspective workshop. After receiving each question, the researcher would type all questions and distribute to the members at the beginning of service. The surveys would be given to the researcher. A second meeting was planed to finalize the surveys and workshops. All questions on the survey were yes or no.

The researcher met with context associates three weeks later and finalized the workshops and surveys. The date and format of the workshop was decided, and each associate shared ideas of their workshop. The surveys were typed by the researcher to distribute to the members. The researcher made the announcement to the church the following Sunday regarding the purpose, workshop and surveys. Instructions would also be given to the congregation for the surveys. Surveys were distributed immediately after service.

The researcher made the 11: 00 a.m. worship service announcements for three consecutive weeks, announcing the time, dates and place of the workshops. Anyone desiring to come was welcomed. It was stressed in the announcements, all information would be confidential.

Surveys were made available to the congregation immediately after service. Because one of the context associates attends another church, surveys were made available to their congregation as well. The context associate also made the announcement regarding the workshop.

The Church of God in Christ is comprised of Jurisdictions, with different congregations under the leadership of Jurisdictional Bishops. The researcher mailed letters to the pastors within the Jurisdiction inviting them to the workshop. See appendix

Completed surveys were returned to the researcher two weeks later by the members.

Project Site

The researcher decided to have the workshops at her church, Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ Ministries, not only for the location, but because she felt the need to create the atmosphere of safety and care for the participants.

The church is located on Dort Highway on the north side of the city. The only business nearby is a gas station on one corner, and a bar on the other. Low income homes and apartment buildings sit further in back of the church. Anyone attending the church will intentionally make the 15 or 20 minute drive, depending where they live in the other part of the city.

The researcher met with the context associates two weeks before the final date and approved the following agenda:

Session I Format

The general format of the first session was as follows:

The facilitator served a light breakfast, consisting of grapes, strawberries, pineapple, blueberries, juice, coffee, and donuts/Danish just before each session.

The facilitator, Linda Irene Itson asked all participants to assemble themselves for prayer. After prayer, they were welcomed and given the reason and purpose of the workshop. It was very important they knew the purpose of the workshop and why the facilitator chose to have them participate. The purpose of the Doctoral program was explained and how each phase was carried out. The facilitator also explained the role of the professional and context associate and why she chose each one. This explanation allowed the participants to understand the role of each associate and the importance of the workshop.

The first workshop would be done by Mr. Chris Johnson. Mr. Chris Johnson is the Assistant Pathologist at Hurley Medical Center. His session, The Affects of Abuse on the Brain would have an impact on the stress of the brain and the psychological impact on the body as a whole. The next workshop, by Mrs. Deborah Hamilton "After the Abuse, What's Next? Would talk about domestic violence and sexual assault abuse, and what to do after the hurt and pain. Many times victims come to the church and sit in silence, never disclosing the pain they are in. The question "what do I do now? comes to mind sitting on the pew. If the church is not equipped to deal with this question, what's next?

Workshop 3 Mrs. Melanie Jones, talks about, "Forgiveness- It's Not for the Other Person, It's for You" addresses the impact unforgiveness has on victims as they go through the motions of existing. It's easy to "act as if all is well" when really, the devastation of mental and physical abuse has caused the victim to be broken in spirit.

At the end of the first session, the facilitator will summarize the workshops. This will also be the time for the participants to ask questions and have comments. After filling out evaluations, the participants will have instructions for the next week and what to expect.

Session Two

The morning will start out with a light breakfast and soft music. The participants will be welcomed back. After prayer, the facilitator will give an overview of the previous week, and participants will be given a chance to ask questions before the workshop starts.

Workshop 4- presented by Mrs. Sherry Hodge "Don't Blow Your Top" will allow everyone to engage in releasing hurt and pain. With physical activity, the presenter will discuss ways of releasing emotional and physical stress. Unfortunately victims remain silent during abuse and have no way of releasing their anger and resentment. This intervention also gave opportunity to interact with others that were hurting as well.

Workshop 5 –presented by Ms. Margaret Jones, "The Power of an Emotional Shower". Self esteem, anger, resentment, frustration and many other negative feelings exit during the time of abuse. Victims rarely break the silence to others because they are ashamed and experience feelings of guilt. They feel alone and think no one has ever gone through the devastation of abuse as they have. Victims often keep family from knowing what is going on because this may anger the abuser and cause more problems. Victims may also hold a certain status or position in the church, and dare not let others know there is a problem. But when victims have had enough and realize they no longer have to participate in the madness of this terrible relationship, the power of freedom gives them a release. No longer are they bound and prisoners in their own body. This emotional shower gives them the peace within they so desperately need.

Workshop 6 -Ms. LaKeysa Adams, presents, "Releasing the Pain". How good it is to release the burdens of abuse that keep you mentally and physically sick. This workshop allowed the participants to sit in a group setting and freely discuss their pain. It was a safe place to release emotions, fears, and anger. Victims learn to keep silent because they have no where to go or no one to talk to. Support groups allow them to talk and discuss their inner hurts. Support groups are the communities they need to feel safe and secure. They were able to relate with others that had the same issues they had.

The participants were asked to discuss their feelings and how this helped with the pain from their hurts. They were not rushed in communicating their thoughts and feelings.

The facilitator closed with summarizing the days sessions. Participants were allowed to express their feelings and expectations they had for themselves after the workshop.

The session closed with everyone holding hands in a circle of prayer.

The plan was to have the workshops from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., but because of dialogues among participants, the agenda was adjusted. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Professional Associates and Context Associates

Because action research is a team effort of planning and implementing the ministry model, the researcher took great care in recruiting her Professional and Context Associates. It was important to have persons on the team that had a working knowledge of helping others. Being a helping professional, will help to ensure integrity and dignity through hurt and pain.

Domestic violence has been one of the best kept secrets in the lives of victims and some perpetrators. To break the silence of abuse, one must be able to understand the journey of the battered and broken. Enduring pain and suffering brings unforgiveness and pain. The researcher sought assistance from various disciplines to extrapolate necessary resources in order to embrace the pathway of forgiveness and healing.

Professional Associates

The researcher was unclear as to what the Professional Associate were responsible for until Phase III. After attending sessions at United, the researcher had a better understanding of requirements for the professional Associates. Although the first Professional Associate offered to be a part of the team during the first phase, she was officially asked during Phase III. Dr. Dawn Bell is imminently qualified to serve as a Professional Associate. Her credentials include adjunct professor, Academic Advisor, and Mentor for African American Females.

She will serve on the researcher's Final Examination Committee.

Attorney Courtney Jones served as a Professional Associate because of her law background. Attorney Jones graduated from Valparaiso University with a Juris Doctor, specializing in Insurance coverage and litigation, and also general liability cases.

Dr. Valerie Calloway, brings research knowledge from Cook County Hospital, and is knowledgeable in the field of research. As a researcher, she will be instrumental in assisting with this project, giving direction and critiquing work.

Context Associates

Three of the Context Associates were Master level clinicians and the other three master level associates come from various disciplines in the helping field. At the context level, all associates were equipped to execute and pull from their respective discipline. The researcher thought it was necessary to extrapolate expertise in the helping profession because of the nature of the subject. The pathway to healing must be traveled by guides who have knowledge of education, forgiveness and direction.

The Process

May 8, 2009

Every journey has a starting point, and the beginning of this journey was the meeting of the researcher and her pastor, Bishop Roger Jones. History of United Theological Seminary, the Doctor of Ministry Program, and the purpose of the meeting was discussed at this time. After explanation of the program, the researched discussed the meaning of Professional Associates and Context Associates and why they were crucial to the program. To the researchers surprise, Bishop Jones was well informed with attributes of United and stated he was pleased the researcher had made United her choice of learning.

It was at this time, the researcher discussed her project with Bishop Jones and asked his permission to use the church, Greater Holy Temple Ministries as her context. The researcher explained to Bishop Jones what the project would entail and exactly what the intervention would be like. As she explained the purpose and why she felt the need for the workshop to address unforgiveness and healing, Bishop Jones was interested in what impact this would have on the congregation. He also shared information regarding litigations concerning domestic violence and implications of abuse regarding the faith based community. At one time, Bishop Jones held the third highest position in the National Church of God in Christ.

The researcher left the meeting preparing for the next step of the journey.

Collection of Data

Saturday July 15, 2009, the researcher called each context Associate and asked for a meeting July 25, 2009 to discuss their purpose for the project and future plans for actual project.

July 25, 2009, the researcher met with all context associates and paid for their breakfast at Bob Evans. During this time, the researcher explained the Doctoral Program at United Theological Seminary. She also explained her project and asked for their input and if they would be willing to participate as workshop leaders. They were all excited to participate. The researcher revealed to them why they were chosen to be Context Associates. The reasons were:

1. They were all in the Helping Profession.
2. They all had experience in working with different cultures and different disciplines.
3. They were all Master Level professionals in their own profession.

4. They were considered experts in their discipline.
5. They each brought knowledge and understanding of spiritual understanding.
6. They all had experienced unforgiveness and healing in the church.

The researcher asked each associate to come up with three questions for a survey to be presented to the congregation. They were also asked to come to the next meeting with topics for a workshop dealing with domestic violence, unforgivenss, and healing. The researcher informed them she would make the final decision as to what topics would be discussed. The researcher discussed unforgiveness and healing in the church and asked for their input.

The next meeting was scheduled for August 15, 2009

August 15, 2009, the researcher met with her team at Greater Holy Temple. After prayer, they discussed:

The place of the workshop would be Greater Holy Temple Ministries, 6702 N. Dort Highway, Flint, MI 48505.

The name of the workshop will be: Domestic violence and Sexual Assault in the Faith based Institution: Forgiveness: A Pathway To healing.

Date of Workshops would be, December 5th. 2009, 9:00 A M. – 12:00 P. M. and December 12th., 2009 9:00 A. M. – 12:00 P.M.

1. Goals of the workshop.
   A. Definition of Domestic Violence and the impact to families and communities.
   B. Definition of Unforgiveness
   C. Definition of Healing
   D. Stress and Domestic Violence
   E. Definition of being in a safe place in church.

F. Establish a contact person (s) in the church.

2. Objectives of the workshop.

   A. Educate persons on Domestic violence

   B. Provide available resources to families and church members.

   C. Create a safe environment for victims of Domestic Violence.

   D. A place where victims, families and church members can talk confidently.

   E. Create persons and numbers for assistance with victims and families.

Length of workshops

The researcher asked the associates to limit their workshop to 35 Minutes, and 10 minutes for questions and answers. (45 Minutes Total)

Workshop Needs:

The researcher stated she would provide the following materials needed for the workshop: (Workshop presenters were free to bring their own material or information).

1. Tent Cards
2. Pens/ Pencils
3. Paper
4. Folders
5. Note Paper
6. Handouts, including (Domestic Violence Agency, Emergency Shelter, Local and State Numbers for Domestic Violence)
7. Table cloth for tables
8. Silverware, cups, and napkins for food
9. CD Player for soft music during breakfast

Anticipated Number of Participants According to response of surveys.

15 participants, male and female,

Audio and visual will be available

Comments or suggestions from the group.

Close/Prayer

After researching this project in depth, the researcher

The last step of the journey.

Saturday December 5th. 2009

The room was prepared for the workshop

Tables were set in horse shoe style for the presenter to be in the middle and all participants could see.

Yellow table cloths were put on each table.

A folder was placed on each chair with agenda, handouts and Agency numbers inside.

Yellow plates, silver ware, cups, and napkins were put on the serving table.

A CD with soft music was started.

A large sign of the domestic violence wheel was put on the wall.

A light breakfast, consisting of strawberries, grapes, pineapple, blueberries, donuts and Danish rolls, coffee, and orange juice, was served by the facilitator, Linda Irene Itson

Participants

The researcher made a final count of twenty persons attending the workshops. 15 surveys were turned in, but 5 unexpected participants showed up. It was a mixture of males and females. Eight person, including one pastor and one Elder, were from one of the sister church's in our

Jurisdiction. Bishop Jones sat in on one of the presentations. The age of participants ranged from twenty to fifty five.

Facilitated by Linda Irene Itson

1. Continental breakfast served
2. Prayer
3. Scripture
4. Welcome/Directions
5. Introductions
6. Video Clip- "Battered Hearts". Discussion of the video generated conversion regarding the impact of children regarding domestic violence.
7. Purpose of workshop. This is where the facilitator explained the school, Professional Associates, the Context Associates (Workshop Presenters), the purpose of the project, and what role participants had in the research.

Workshop 1 Mr. Chris Johnson
Assistant Pathologist Hurley Medical Center
The Affects of Abuse on the Brain

As the Assistant Pathologist at Hurley Medical Center, Mr. Chris Johnson understands the functions of the body and how each body part connects. Domestic Violence has had an effect not only on the physical, but the mental as well. As a survivor of domestic violence, the researcher can identify with "The Affects of Abuse on the Brain". Being hit in the head, knocked in the head, and sometimes stomped in the head may cause serious injury, or for some, death.

Not until a full autopsy is done, the affects of abuse on the brain may never be known. Mr. Johnson actually brought a human brain to explain the affects.

Workshop 2 Mrs. Deborah Hamilton
After the Abuse, What's Next?

Mrs. Deborah Hamilton was a Salary Assistant Program Purchasing Manager for General Motors. She was also on the International Joint Venture Engineering Staff. With a double Masters, she was well qualified to speak on "After the Abuse, What's Next?" Mrs.

Hamilton's abilities to deal with people of all nationalities will certainly be an asset to the team. Many survivors learn how to negotiate and navigate their lives in abusive situations.

They spend their waking hours dealing with life and death issues pertaining to their families and themselves. The abuse can be so devastating; one has no direction as what to do or where to go. Many come to the church thinking they have reached a place of safety. Victims come to the church and may think the church, pastor, and some members may offer a Balm in Gilead, but to their surprise, there is no balm, and certainly no healing. So what happens after the abuse? Where does one go after the abuse? How will victims in the church learn the pathway to forgiveness in order to heal? It is through spiritual growth and development that we heal, and through healing we grow in wisdom.

Workshop 3 Mrs. Melanie Jones
Forgiveness- It's Not for the Other Person, It's for You

Mrs. Melanie Jones presented the third workshop, entitled " Forgiveness – It's not for the other Person, It's for You". Mrs. Jones is a licensed Clinical Social Worker, specializing in mental health counseling, marriage counseling and women's specialty. Understanding how unforgiveness can eat at the core of your soul and heart, Mrs. Jones explained how to let it go. Her workshop dealt with emotions, feelings and the impact unforgivness can have on the individual carrying the pain.

Linda Itson - Summary of workshops.

There was so much personal sharing in between the workshops and during the summary of the day, we did not end the workshop until 12:55 p.m. It was important to the researcher to allow time for the participants to discuss their feelings. For some, it could have been the release of unforgiveness and certainly a pathway to healing.

Close/ Evaluations

At the end of session one, participants were given a small white tin heart, filled with three peppermints and a scripture regarding forgiveness or healing. See Appendix. One peppermint represented the past, another represented the present, the last peppermint represented the future. We all have a past that may keep us stuck in a certain position, and if we are not careful, our present position may keep us tide to the past. But as we forgive the past, we look forward to the future, a pathway of healing.

2nd Workshop

December 12, 2009

Because the room was set from the previous week, everything was in order. Participants returned with their folders.

A light breakfast, consisting of donuts, croissants', fruit, juice and water was served.

Facilitated by Linda Irene Itson

Prayer
Scripture
Welcome back
Over View of previous workshop

Workshop 4 Mrs. Sherry Hodge
Don't Blow Your Top

Workshop 4

Mrs. Sherry Hodge, also a Master Licensed Social Worker discussed ways to release your pain. Her workshop entitled, "Don't Blow Your Top" was surrounded by activities to release your pain through therapeutical fun. Many will come to the church and never release the hurt and pain within. The community needs a safe place and understanding

place to empty the secrets of turmoil and grief. It's important to know, the church can be that place.

Workshop 5 Ms Margaret Jones
The power of an Emotional Shower

Ms. Margaret Jones has dealt with special education and higher learning. Holding two Master's Degree in Education, and retired after thirty years of teaching in secondary education, Ms. Jones explained "The Power of an Emotional Shower". We must understand how emotions can be so powerful in our lives, and how they rule our very existence. Even though we have been showered with hurt and pain, we must learn how to endure. In her book, Endurance, Leola Irene Green states, "The enemy of our souls does not want us to learn the quality of endurance"[118] Learning how to endure during the time of crisis can help us with the journey of healing. This workshop dealt with self esteem, anger, resentment and frustration. The devastation of a failed marriage or failed relationship brings more embarrassing emotions victims must deal with. But when emotions began to heal, it's like a shower of blessings from above. The renewed strength of survivors takes on new meaning. There is power in emotions, but only when healing begins.

Workshop 6 Ms LaKeysa Adams
Releasing the Pain

Ms. Lakeysa Adams holds a Master's Degree in Education, Guidance and Counseling Development. At the present time she is working for The Veterans Affairs Medical Center as the Compensated Work therapy Program manager. Her role is to counsel and educate veterans on mental health issues that are barriers to employment and their personal lives. She is knowledgeable in research, group techniques, counseling techniques, and testing

[118] Leola Irene Green. Endurance. Onelda Publishing. Muskegon, MI 1999

procedures. Her workshop, "Release the Pain was to help participants develop an outlet to release challenging issue in our lives. These issues will either keep us isolated or kill us.

The enemy wants us to live a life in darkness and be ashamed of our hurts, pain, and disappointments. Once the enemy is exposed, and we release the pain with the help of our savior Jesus Christ, healing and forgivness becomes easier to accept. Her focus was set around a support group style. With all the information participants received from the other workshops, this would give them an opportunity to utilize the knowledge they gained and also give them a chance to speak about their pain. The participants were asked to get in groups of three. They were given instructions:

Group scenario: A group of people that are experts, professionals, church members, pastors, etc.. Everyone was brought to the table to help support individuals that are hurting.

Topics to discuss: (1)How do we help people to forgive?

(2) How do we help people to heal when they come to the church? (You may use your own experience and how you released your pain)

In your group, you need a writer, and a spokesperson who will dictate the answer from the group.

You will be given 15 minutes to discuss and write.

The spoke person from your group will discuss your topic.

After the small group, participants were given 5 tips to think about:

1. Spend time alone with God each morning, or any specific time you can consistently set aside for "alone time"
2. Avoid states of helplessness by taking control and implementing a coping strategy no matter how minor.

3. Remember God has forgiven you of more than you have forgiven others.
4. Understand, forgiving is not saying it never happened.
5. Forgive through Christ.

At the end of the group, each person was given a poem that started with the word "IT" in every statement. On a piece of a paper, they were to write down what goal they will work on toward forgiving whatever the "IT" is through healing and forgiveness. Once they were finished, they were to put the paper in the envelop provided to them and seal it with their return address on it. This envelop would be mailed back to them in 2 months to see where they are.

The group concluded with a small prayer.

Each participant was asked by Linda Itson to comment on the workshops presented to them.

After the comments, Linda Itson gave remarks and thanked everyone for participating in the research project.

Evaluations were distributed to each participant.

The visiting pastor was asked to give the closing prayer.

At the end of the second session, participants were given a yellow box filled with three peppermints. On the top of the box, was a small daisy. The participants were told, each pedal was the shedding of pain and unforgivness in their life. It also represented the beginning of new life for the future. As they thought about a daisy in the field, they were to envision God holding them in a safe place. The peppermints represented the father, the other the Son, and the last peppermint, represented the Holy Spirit. In order for true deliverance, one must accept the Father, receive His Son and acknowledge the Holy Spirit. The peppermint also represents a sweet and soothing taste of the forgivness that heals the heart.

Overview of workshops from the facilitator and participants.

Session evaluations were completed and participants were asked to give comments on the sessions. They were also asked to share how the workshop made an impact, if any, on their life.

As the participants began sharing their experience from the workshops, release from pain and hurt began to surface. Tears of joy began to flow from some of the participants. They expressed how joyful they felt in releasing the anger, pain and hurt for many years. The timing was right and the place of safety allowed the participants to be set free. Pastor Charles Williams, one of the participants, gave words of encouragement to everyone, including the researcher. Needless to say, we were long past the suggested time to leave.

The researcher thanked everyone for coming. Everyone was asked to get in a circle and hold hands, and Pastor Williams was asked to pray the closing prayer.

Analysis of Data

"Action Research aims to increase the ability of the involved community or organization members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so".[119] Understanding the impact of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Faith Based Community may have substantial impacts on victims as they grapple with unforgiveness and healing. The authors, Greenwood, and Levin state "action research is composed of a balance of three elements:

1. Research in the power of knowledge
2. Participation, placing a strong value on democracy and control over one's own life situations.

[119] Davvyd J. Greenwood, Morten Levin. Introduction to Action Research. Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks. London New Delhi.1998

3. Action: also a participatory in a second sense because Action research" aims to alter the initial situation of the group, organization, or community in the direction of a more self managing liberated state".[120]

The researcher's intent was to inform, educate and evaluate the participants as they engaged in the healing process to move forward with their lives. It was also the intent of the researcher to give direction and help facilitate liberation for abused victims.

Pre-workshop survey

A survey was distributed to congregants, 15 were actually returned.

Survey questions were as follows: Yes or No

Question: Are you experiencing headaches, neck, chest, back stomach, or leg pain?
Answer: 100 % of the respondents replied (no)

Question: Do you feel tired and fatigued, exhausted, experiencing lack of sleep, or weight loss/gain?
Answer: 78% of the respondents replied (no) 22% replied (yes)

Question: Have you ever experienced domestic violence-psychological or physical?
Answer: 45% respondents replied (yes) 55% replied (no)

Question: During the time you were experiencing domestic violence issues, did you increase church participation?
Answer: 10 % of the respondents replied (yes) 90 % replied (no)

Question: Have you or anyone you know discussed domestic violence with a spiritual leader?
Answer: 30% of the respondents replied (yes) 70% replied (no)

Question: Have you ever felt deficient to adequately transfer your feelings into the appropriate words?
Answer: 80% of the respondents replied (no) 15% replied (yes)

Question: Are you able to celebrate your individuality?
Answer: 50% of the respondents replied (Yes) 50% replied (no)

Question: Did the church help you with your domestic violence issue?
Answer: 80% of the respondents replied (no) 20% replied (yes)

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[120] Ibid, page 8

Question: Was the church a safe place for you to come?
Answer:50% of the respondents replied (yes) 20% replied (no)30%was undecided.

Question: Did the church help you heal?
Answer: 60% of the respondents replied (no) 30% replied (yes) 10% replied undecided

Question: Did the church help you with forgiveness?
Answer: 70% of the respondents replied (no) 30% replied (yes)

Question: Is the church able to provide adequate counseling for domestic violence?
Answer: 80% of the respondents replied (no) 20% replied (yes)

Question: Are you willing to participate in a workshop dealing with domestic violence?
Answer: 100% of the respondents replied (yes)

Question: Will you be able to commit to a 2-three hour workshop?
Answer: 99% of the respondents replied (yes) 1% replied (no)

If you answered YES to any of these questions, you should attend.
ALL DISCUSSSIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL
Please contact names below for more information
Phone numbers were given out for contact information

Linda Itson
Sherry Hodge
Workshops Saturday December 5th. and 12th. 2009
Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ Ministries
6702 N. Dort Highway
Flint, Mi 48505
9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.

Five unexpected participants came during the actual workshops, which made a total of 20 participants in attendance. This was enough to impart knowledge, educate and interview. The researcher is aware of members that would not participate because of shame and guilt, but was pleased for those that had the courage to do so.

The researcher used the evaluations to gage what was learned and improvements for any future planning.

CHAPTER SIX
REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflections on the Field Experience

As the researcher reflects on this project, feelings of self worth have increased. Healing not only took place with participants, but with the researcher as well. Increased awareness also took place with the participants and researcher. It was a journey worth taking.

As the researcher reflects on the workshops provided for this project, overall it was a much needed purpose for this ministry. The workshop was the beginning of a unique catalyst for the intervention in domestic violence and sexual assault. As stated in my proposal, the focus was to create a community within the church where victims and survivors of abuse could address the impact of hurt and pain and the pathways to forgiveness and healing. As I observed the participants, I witnessed continual conversation between participants, presenters and myself. It was evident that the participants were in need of a Pathway to forgiveness and inner healing.

The need was addressed in the two three hour workshops by facilitating topics that would promote education, knowledge and growth. Each Context Associate for this project presented a session for the two Saturday workshops.

The project was held at the researcher's church, Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ Ministries. It was the decision of the researcher and Context Associates to facilitate the three hour sessions for two consecutive Saturdays.

Surveys were distributed to members of the congregation and as a result, participants of the surveys were the attendees. Fifteen surveys were returned, but twenty actually attended. Because one of the Context Associates attends another church in our Jurisdiction, surveys were

distributed there as well. The pastor and one of the Elders in his church came with some of the members to attend the workshop. The researcher expected more, but was happy for the twenty.

Workshop One

Saturday December 5, 2009

Facilitated by Linda Irene Itson

A light breakfast, consisting of fruits, donuts, water, and juice allowed the participants to sit from 9:00 a.m.to 12:30 p.m. and not be hungry.

A sign in sheet was passed to each participant.

The first session was filled with anxiety and excitement. To actually be able to present information for individuals that may be experiencing hurt and pain was an honor. Understanding unforgiveness and no inner healing from the past, and sometimes, present situations, helped the researcher to be attentive to the needs of others. It was the desire of this researcher to create a caring community for hurting individuals to feel safe. The researcher wanted the Church to be a healing agent for the people.

There were three sessions during this workshop. Each session was forty five minutes in duration, including questions and answers. The discussions after each session were so intent, we sometimes went over the allotted time, and therefore got out later than expected. But no one complained, and as a matter of fact, they were glad to be able to have the extra time. Folders were given to each participant with information regarding domestic violence, information regarding resources and paper for notes. The first session, The Effects of Abuse on the Brain was done by The Assistant Pathologist of Hurley Medical Center, Mr. Chris Johnson. Understanding how stress and domestic violence affects the brain and body was very enlightening. The

participants were able to view a human brain which had lasting effects. The second session, Mrs. Deborah Hamilton asked "After the Abuse, What's Next?" brought dialogue from all of the participants. Sitting in the church with unforgiveness with no direction was the majority of the group. After experiencing domestic violence and sexual assault, how does the survivor break the cycle of unforgiveness and reach for healing? Many come to the church looking for refuge and a place of safety. But is the church really a safe place? Does the church help to create a safe environment for victims? The last workshop for this session was; Forgiveness; It's Not for the other person, It's for You, presented by Mrs. Melanie Jones, had a strong message for the participants. Forgiveness is a decision to let go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. Dr. Katherine Piedman stated in her article: Forgiveness: Letting go of grudges and bitterness, "

> The act that hurt or offended you may always remain a part of your life, but forgiveness can lesson the grip that keeps you from inner healing. Forgiveness doesn't mean that you deny the other person hurt you, and it doesn't minimize or justify the wrong. You can forgive the person without excusing the act. This caused tears from some of the participants, and the beginning of inner healing. [121]

The researcher summarized the workshop and asked if anyone had anything to say. Several participants made noteworthy comments: (Because of confidentiality, names will not be used)

Participant 1-

" First of all, thank you for doing this workshop today. To be honest, when I got the survey, I hesitated in making a commitment for two Saturdays in a row because I didn't know what to expect. Once I decided to come, I was not sure how much I would say in front of my

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[121] Katherine Piderman, Ph.D. Forgiveness: Letting go of grudges and bitterness. Mayo Clinic health/forgiveness 7/18/2010

church family. But after listening to everyone talk about their situations, and especially their abuse, I am glad I came. The reason I am in Flint today is because I had to get away from my husband, because if I didn't , he would have probably killed me. My family had no idea I was going through this kind of abuse. They didn't know every time I would get knocked around and have to go to work or around them. I was so afraid of him, my stomach stayed up set all the time.

I was afraid to do anything because he would never be satisfied. I really didn't have a clue as to what I should do or where I should go, but I knew I couldn't keep getting hit and called out of my name. I had a few people here and I came here. After I got my divorce, I found my self always thinking about the hell I went through and how I could have been killed. When I came to the church, I really didn't know anybody and would have never told you what had happed to me.

But listening to all that has been said today, I wish workshops like this was in place would have been in place when I came to the church. This would have saved me a lot of wet pillows and a lot of pain. I hope we have more of these workshops, because I have learned a lot and maybe if new people that come to our church are going through the same thing I went through, it would help them. All the classes were good, but the part on the brain helped me understand all the hits I got up side my head and what effects it had on my brain. I am not saying I understand why I got hit, but I do understand better what happens inside my brain. I know a little more about domestic violence now and I feel better about myself. Thanks for all the information."

Participants 2

"This was helpful to me too. I learned a lot and am glad I came too. I don't want to sound mean or bad mouth the church, but the church was not there for me and what I mean is that no one knew what I was going through. I didn't trust them and I didn't want them or anybody to know I was being abused. I did go to the pastor, but he told me to pray about my

situation and God would take care of it. He didn't understand because he had never been through what I had to go through. My self esteem was nothing and I felt like I was nothing. I am embarrassed to say I thought about killing myself and ending it all. I wondered if anybody in this church knew or if anybody had the same problem? He cussed me out everyday, he hit me every other day and I just got tired. My family didn't understand why I stayed with him and they would have got involved, but I didn't want them hurt. This has been a good thing for me to come and know other women went through the same thing. I learned a lot today and wish you guys would have these workshops more often. The teachers were good and knew what they were talking about. I feel better and I know I am a survivor."

Participant 3

'This is a good time for me to share this. I have never talked about this before to anyone but my pastor. I was involved in a relationship and was madly in love. Everything was going fine until he got mad one day and slapped me. I have always been the one to fight back. That just made him mad the more. We would fight all the time. I got pregnant and he still beat me. I thought if we had a baby, he would not fight me any more, well I was wrong. After the baby was born, we started fighting more. What made matters worse; he would rape me and tell me he deserved this for me being the bad person I was. I almost hated him. I couldn't understand how a person could be so hateful and hurting to another individual. But he was who he was and that was not going to change. He came home one day and started fighting me and calling me all kind of names. We started fighting and I was so tired of this life, I decided it was time to go. He knocked me to the floor and started kicking me. I was hurt bad and finally got off the floor.

When I got it together, I went into the bedroom and got his gun. I came out with it and he grabbed the baby. He thought I wouldn't shoot him, but I lost it that day. I shot him and watched

him fall to the floor. The sad part is, I didn't care anymore. It didn't matter if he died or not. Like I said, no one knew about this but my pastor, and he is here and can tell you the same thing. I was so broken I couldn't think and I couldn't function. As time went on, I was able to function, but just barely making it. He didn't die, but I died on the inside. Today, I am much better, and I am glad I came to hear what was going on. I hope we can do this at our church and I hope you do more on the forgiveness part. I think I have healed, but this was good for me. I can't say the church helped me, but I can say my pastor was there for me and didn't turn his back on me after he found out what I did. When I came to his church, I didn't tell him right away, but when I did, he was very supportive. I have never shared this before, but I feel comfortable in telling you this because this has been helpful to me. If you have something else, I will come back to learn."

The researcher had no idea this had happened to this person, because she always appeared quiet and easy going.' How many times do we come to the church and appear to be one way and actually are completely different because of the hurt and pain.

The participants were given small white tin shaped hearts filled with three peppermints and a forgiveness scripture inside. This represented the hurt and pain they had experienced and the scripture to help with unforgiveness.

Evaluations were distributed to participants, and the researcher thanked them for coming.

Workshop Two

Saturday December 12, 2009

Facilitated by Linda Irene Itson

A light breakfast consisting of donuts, fruit, juice and bottled water was served to the participants.

A sign in sheet was passed to each participant.

After prayer, scripture and an over view of the previous workshop, session four began with the Context Associate discussing "Don't Blow Your Top" This session allowed the participants to have a little fun and still understand the affects of domestic violence. We know that stress is unavoidable in life and how important it is to our overall health and well being to find ways to reduce the stress in our lives. Long term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body in many ways including the following: raised blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contributes to infertility, sleep problems, pain, autoimmune diseases, speed up the aging process and exacerbates other medical, physical or mental health conditions. In addition, long term stress can even rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression.

This fun filled session provided the participants with new ways to relieve stress and renew their mind, body and spirit. Games were played that moved the participants out of their comfort zone. In order to understand forgiveness: A pathway to healing, one must get out of their comfort zone and start the process of recovery from the past. Mrs. Sherry Hodge, the presenter created a safe place to have fun, and relieve stress. The church needs to create a safe place for survivors to heal. The fifth session, "The Power of An Emotional Shower, presented by Ms. Margaret Jones, gave the participants points to ponder. The first thing to ponder, was a comment from Jesus " Be thou made whole." It was explained to the group, wholeness encompasses all that we are as human beings- our minds, emotions, as well as our spirit and physical body. We need to recognize the relationship (our DNA) and it's three simple strands (a) we are made for relationships (b) We are made with the capacity to choose and (c) we are made to take

responsibility for our selves. With this being said, we have three kinds of relationships, (1) with others, (2) with ourselves and (3) with God. All three must be in balance of each other, and all three are tied to each other. We must take control of our thoughts, feelings and reactions by taking personal responsibility for them. Become the CEO of your own life, and become empowered by taking full responsibility for yourself. You must realize that every negative thing that happens to you can be reframed into something positive. The trauma of domestic violence and sexual assault may be an emotional pain that is hard to endure, but the shower of forgiveness and inner healing will bring joy to the broken hearted.

The last session, "Releasing the Pain" presented by Ms Lakeysa Adams allowed the participants to get in a circle and discuss what they had learned from the previous sessions. The circle also provided an opportunity to discuss, how coming to the workshop helped release emotional pain and suffering of domestic violence and sexual assault. Several participants discussed the impact of abuse on their lives. During the sharing from the circle, participants were able to release inner hurts, anger, resentments and difficulty in moving forward. Additional comments were made during the closing remarks from the participants. Many shared how "refreshed" they felt after being able to discuss their feelings and not be judged. A few of the participants shared their story at the end and stated if they had the opportunity to "do this again" they would be willing to come back.

Interviews

The researcher observed the sign in sheet and called every fifth person that signed in. They were asked if the researcher could interview them over the phone regarding the workshop. The four replies were yes. Interview questions and responses were as follows:

1. Have you ever participated in a domestic violence/ sexual assault works before?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   All four answered No

2. Were you hesitant about coming?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   All four answered NO

3. Were you comfortable with the place of the workshop?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   All four answered Yes

4. Did the workshop meet your expectations?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   All four answered Yes

5. Did you gain knowledge about domestic violence/sexual assault?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   All four answered Yes

6. Were you able to ask questions?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   All four answered Yes

7. Do you feel the church is a safe place?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   3 answered Yes 1 Answered No

8. Would you be willing to attend another domestic violence/sexual assault workshop?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

All four said Yes

9. Would you consider coming to the church for counseling if available?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   Three said Yes 1 was undecided

10. Do you have any comments?

Respondent 1- " I really enjoyed the workshop because I never had the opportunity to hear what others have gone through, except on T V. It was nice to hear the different presenters discuss their subjects and I thought they were knowledgeable about what they were talking about" I wish my daughter was there, because she is going through this right now. Her church never talks about things like this and I wish she could have seen that brain. I think you should do more workshops on other subjects and let anybody that wants to come be able to come. I am glad I came, and I am glad you gave us those folders so I can look at them. Thanks for letting me come.

Respondent 2 - " First of all, why wasn't the Bishop and the Elders there? I think everybody in the church should hear this. It was informative and I was shocked when Dr. Johnson pulled out that real brain. That was the first time I ever saw something like that. I think if we had more workshops like that, it would help people to heal and feel better about themselves. It just wasn't long enough". My other concern is doing things like this and never doing them again. Our church never talks about things like this and we don't have anybody to talk to. I don't want people knowing my business, but I would like to be able to talk to somebody who knows what they are talking about. I didn't t know the presenters knew all that information. We always hear them talking about the bible, but never about how we feel or what is happening in real life. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy our church and I like coming, but if we

had things like this on a regular basis, we might be able to cope better in our homes and with our children, who by the way should have been there to. This was a good thing for everybody that was there. Are you doing this again?

Respondent 3- " This was the best workshop I have ever been to. I was impressed how everything just flowed together. I could tell you put a lot of preparation into this. We just didn't have enough time. In my opinion, it should be longer, at least 2 days. I didn't know half the stuff they were talking about. Even though I have never been in that situation, I know women who have. I have seen my neighbor beat outside her house and when the police came, they didn't do a thing. He beat her and the kids, and she finally left him after 28 years of going through that mess with him. I used to ask why women stayed in that horrible situation and how could they let their children be in that? But after hearing what I heard in that workshop helped me to understand them better. I still wouldn't do it, but it helped me. I was glad you talked about God and how he fits into this because even though I am saved, couldn't understand why he would let men beat the devil out of you. To be honest with you, I don't think the pastors know what to tell people when they talk to them. Prayer is not always the answer when somebody is kicking your butt. Some of them should have been there. Oh, you did have two pastors there. This would be good for the young ladies in the church, so they will know what to do and what not to do. I enjoyed it."

Respondent 4- "This was very cleansing for me and I felt like somebody finally heard my pain. I enjoyed all the workshop sessions, especially the one on forgiveness and the shower one. I could relate to both of them I couldn't stop crying. I was so filled up after leaving both workshops, I cried all the way home. This really opened my eyes that I had not forgiven my X-husband. Until that class on forgiveness, I thought about getting even with him for the pain he

put me and my kids through, but then I knew he wasn't worth me going to jail and not be here for my kids. If I had shared what really happened in my marriage, they all would have been crying. All the presenters took their time and told important things that really helped me. This was better than watching things like this on the T V. The church needs to step up to the plate and tell people how to get away from abuse and stop telling women to stay and pray about it. I stayed because I didn't know any better, and I thought I would be committing a sin if I left. If I only knew then what I know now, I would have left the first time he hit me. Maybe if other women in the church knew this they would probably leave to. I hope we can do this again, because I would bring some women I know going through this that really needs help. That's what the church is for, helping people. I enjoyed it.

Pleased with the interview questions, the researcher realized how important it was to have the workshops. Taking all this information into consideration, this researcher has learned as much as the participants. It was no small task to undertake this project. It was a learning experience for the researcher as well as the participants.

Modification of the Ministry Model

The researcher was pleased as to what happened with the workshop, but it was apparent improvement must be done, which will enhance future projects.

More Session Time

Increasing the time of the workshops will allow the facilitators to give more information. It was apparent to the researcher, it was not enough time for the facilitators, or, the participants.

Questions were answered, but it was not enough time for serious dialogue. More time should be given for dialogue in sessions, especially when participants began sharing inner hurts. Future workshops will require at least one or more full day sessions, to allow participants time to

disclose and share. During one of the workshops, one of the participants began to share her story. It was only the second time since the victimization happened, that she was able to disclose personal feelings. She stated she was comfortable enough to tell what happened and it really helped to be able to talk about it. As emotional and spiritual healing began to surface, individuals should be able to release in a safe place and not be overwhelmed with time.

Additional Outside Speakers

This researcher feels it might be helpful to have several survivors to share their testimony with the participants. The impact of sharing will help facilitate emotions buried within. Listening to others tell their story in the workshop had a profound impact with everyone sitting in the room. It also allows survivors in the room to understand they are not, and have not been alone. Isolation is very prevalent in the lives of domestic violence victims, and if not dealt with may cause withdrawal from family, friends and sometimes, church.

Guest speakers and /or public figures may be invited to help bring awareness to the devastation of domestic violence. Inviting public figures will serve as resource advocates to survivors in the church or someone they may know. It is this researcher's belief, giving the survivor a plan of escape is vital to their existence.

Role Play

Observing the participants, and listening to the comments in the workshop, this researcher believes a role play might have been powerful. Being a survivor of domestic violence, sometimes one may be in denial "this just happened because I didn't clean up" This would not have happened if I had fixed the right meal" or "if I had not been late coming home". Such statements acted out may help the victim understand or see this is not just an isolated event. Just listening to others in the workshop allowed me to see how "controlled I really was in my own abuse.

Looking at the participants, it appeared to this researcher, they were examining their own inner feelings. It also appeared to this researcher, many were relieved just to know someone cared enough to allow them to release some of the hurt and pain that laid in secret until locked minds of unforgiveness and healing began to surface.

Sexual Assault Education- "NO' Study Guide.

This is a tool the researcher discovered in research of this project A study Guide invented by ----is a tool for education and workshop facilitators. Had this researcher learned of such a tool, it certainly would have been used to promote the education and learning of this project. Permission to use this information was noted in the guide. This is a 100 page guide that includes:

1. Transcribed testimonies of rape survivors and quotes to spark discussion.
2. Myths and facts about rape and sexual assaults.
3. Worksheets and handouts.
4. The role religion plays in violence against women.
5. Roles of dance in healing and sexual violence.
6. Books, journals, and articles on sexual violence.

This information would have been an added tool to assist in creating participation for the project.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

As the researcher reflects back over the Doctoral Project, overall it served a much needed purpose for the church and participants. Each phase of the project enhanced the learning for the researcher. At times, it was so intense, the research wanted to give up, but the longing to encourage others and assist hurting women, out weighed the thought of giving up.

From the first Intensive Session, August 2008, the researcher has learned the importance of being in a close spiritual group. Supervised by a caring mentor, and caring peers, the researcher has learned the value of "spiritual sisters". The process began by being overwhelmed and sometimes discouraged with self, but the support of the mentor and peers gave the researcher

inner strength to keep going. This process has continued throughout the program. Discovery of self has begun inner healings the researcher may have never known without the project.

Domestic violence has taken it's tole on many women and even some men. Laws have been passed over the years, but it's only the beginning of a long battle that seems to never end. Paul, writes to Titus, "to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men."[122] This teaching should be for all life's situations, and the home we live in should have the same behavior, but does it?

Statistics from many studies have shown that on any given Sunday, approximately twenty five percent of the women that attend Sunday morning service are victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. They are sitting right in the pews next to us, and most of the time we never know. Their abuse may range from verbal abuse to sexual abuse, but no one really knows.

Domestic violence is rarely addressed from the pulpit, nor is it talked about in Sunday school. Research shows that most spiritual leaders are reluctant or unprepared to deal with domestic violence or sexual assault. Al Miles in his book, Domestic Violence, "What Every Pastor Should Know, reveals that the theological training and beliefs given most clergy can easily contribute to increased violence and abuse of the victim."[123]

The church is believed to be a place of refuge, and a place of safety, but if never addressed, the abused go unnoticed. Many Christians turn to their church or pastor for help, If the pastor is not equipped, what happens to the hurting person?

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[122] New International Bible
[123] Al Miles. What Every Pastor Should Know.

Phase 2:

Studying the nature of God and religious truths and mans relationship to God has certainly been a journey. Understanding the religious philosophy of man compared to what God is actually saying has brought new awareness to this researcher. Jesus forgave his accusers, and he healed the sick, certainly leaders and Christians can help institute a pathway for forgiveness and healing to the hurting and abused. This researcher has examined the scriptures and the behavior of man, and the outcome was a closer relationship for the researcher with God. It had to be divine intervention for this researcher to investigate the pathway of forgiveness to healing as a project. Years ago, going through humiliation, devastation, hurt and pain, no one would have thought the day would come, healing would manifest itself through the writings of a project.

The commitment and involvement with this project has stirred emotions and feelings, causing the researcher to reach out to others that need help. The efforts of laying a solid foundation and creating a community for survivors and abused women of domestic violence in the church has shown the researcher the need for a counseling center in the church. The ground work has already begun for the expansion of workshops and seminars for the future. Evaluations presented after the workshops conveyed a need for more workshops, education and guidance. The participants expressed the compassion they felt during the workshops and how they were able to relax and be themselves. More than half expressed a need for a counseling center from Christian counselors. Knowing trained professionals were available would make a difference in the church for victims of domestic violence. Not only victims of domestic violence, those wounded in the church would have a safe place to go.

Participants came to the workshop to be educated and informed about domestic violence. They received information, education and resources that would help them find a pathway of

forgiveness that will lead them to healing. As the participants started their journey, the researcher was on the same journey. After looking at the evaluations, it was evident the workshop proved to be valuable to all who participated. Participants were able to experience what it means to have a safe place for forgivenss and healing. They were also able to communicate with others that had the same feelings of anger resentment and pain. The process of healing was evident as the participants engaged in conversation with each other and the presenters.

Phase 3

This project has proven it is a great need for future endeavors of attending to the needs of women who have been victimized and abused. The researcher proposes to solicit three of the context associates and prepare for the construction of a Christian Counseling Center at the church. Because they are all Licensed Master Level Clinicians, the foundation is already in place. Clinicians are already trained, and each one has a specialty that will enhance the center, even to the needs of children.

During the process of this project, the researcher has found not everyone will seek help, nor will all leaders be excited, or willing to participate in growth. Sometimes, jealousy, envy and strife will present itself in the middle of the process. But if you stay focused on the needs of the injured, and stay on the journey, God will always make a way.

Phase 4:

This project has shown the researcher how important it is to be committed to the process. Not only must you be committed, you must be honest with yourself in all that you do. Sometimes, you may have to look in the mirror and see the real you. We can all dress up and look good on the out side, but it's the inside that really matters. Getting to know you and your

needs will allow you to see just who you are. In her book, It's Not About You. It's About God, Rebecca Florence Osaigboro, states:

The crisis in our lives are designed to force us to lean on Jesus, the help we already have within.[124] The insight gained from this process allowed the researcher to see survivors in a different way. Silence may not always be a negative experience. It may draw you closer to God. Going through the storm alone takes you to a place where the only one to call is God. This project allowed victims to lean on Jesus. The church was not equipped to assist them with forgiveness and healing. They came to the church broken, and left after the morning message broken. The church needs to be a place where we heal from life's situations and tragedies. More than anywhere else, people come to the church looking for refuge. They feel the church is a safe place where they can heal. But as we have seen so many times in our own place of worship, the church is silent. But as this epidemic continues, we must be a light for those that are hurting and sometimes lost. The church must take on stand on Domestic Violence and educate the leaders and congregation on this epidemic.

Phase 5

The researcher knows first hand what it's like not to be able to talk or communicate with others what takes place in the home. Women have been told at an early age to "keep silent" No matter what happens in the home, "you are not to talk about it." Women have been told "our business is our business, don't tell anyone. Some have even been told" you better not tell". Biblical scriptures encourage women to "keep silent" so when tragedy comes, women know to "keep silent. " Violent tactics and behaviors arise out of definite intention to exert power and control in an atmosphere of privacy, secrecy and isolation. The wounds of the silent and secrecy will continue to ravish the silent sufferers who cannot give voice to their anguish. Privacy,

[124] Rebecca Florence Osaigboro. It's Not About You, It's About God. Intervarsity Press. Grover, Illinois. 2003

silence, keeping the secret… therein lies the abuser's power." [125] The church must encourage the victim to tell their stories and help them find refuge when they speak.

The church must be a caring community assisting those in need of a safe place to come for refuge. We must be able to provide resources and education to equip victims in the time of trouble. Victims must be able to come to a confidential place and share their inner feelings and hurts. It is important they feel comfortable in discussing their most private feelings, which keep them tied to the relationship. The church must end it's legacy of denial and become the true instrument of Jesus Christ. They must be in the ministry of healing the broken and become the true instrument of the grace of Christ. In order for members to be helped, and guided in the right direction, it is crucial pastors take time and become educated on domestic violence and sexual assault. They also must recognize members in the congregation that are professionals in the field of counseling that could assist them with hurting and abused persons.

My project: Forgiveness: A Pathway To Healing is now complete.

To God Be The Glory For What He Has Done.

[125] Kathy Manis Findley. The Survivors Voice. Smyth and Helvys Publishing, Inc. Macon Georgia. 1999

APPENDIX

Letter to the Context Associates

July 23, 2009

Dear Context Associate,

I hope this communication finds you well and in good health.
I would like to take this opportunity to Thank You for accepting to be on my team, as I pursue my Doctoral Degree at United Theological Seminary. My paper will be on:
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Faith Based Community, with a focus on, Forgiveness as a Pathway to Healing.

I have communicated information with a few of you and requested you read a portion of my project. I am now at the point where I need your input. If possible, I would like to meet with you for approximately 1 hour and establish the purpose of a Context Associate, future dates, and meeting times.

I would like to meet you @
Fire Mountain (Miller Rd)
Saturday July 30, 2009
10:00 A.M. – 11: 00 A.M.
For those of you that have Foundation Papers, please bring them with you for a short discussion and review. If you are unable to make it, please call me so we can schedule a time together.
Thank you in advance and I hope to hear from you soon.

Blessings and Peace
Linda Itson
Phone number was given

Context Associates Meeting
August 15, 2009

AGENDA

Prayer
Review of last meeting. – Linda Itson
Survey Questions
- Discussion

Distribution of survey questions
Letters to Pastors – Linda
Jurisdiction Communication.- Linda
Workshops
- Place- Greater Holy Temple
- Days
- Time
- Length

- Presenters/Topics
  - **1.**
  - **2.**
  - **3.**
  - **4.**
  - **5.**
  - **6.**

Suggestion- Workshops may be divided into 3 per session. (3 one week, 3 other week)

Please have the name of your workshop at the next meeting.
Ideas/Comments

Thank You
Next Meeting
TBD

Context Associates Meeting
October 31, 2009

Prayer
Scripture
Update on School
Review of last meeting
Survey Questions
Discussion - Questions/ Workshop

Dates: December 5th 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
December 12th. 9:00 A M. – 12:00 P.M.

Presenters/ Topics

December 5, 2009

(1) Chris Johnson

(2) Melanie Jones

(3) Debra Hamilton

December 12, 2009

(1) Sherry Hodge

(2) Margaret Jones

(3) Keysa Adams

Survey Questions

1. Are you experiencing Headache, Neck, Chest, Back, Stomach or Leg and Arm pain?
2. Do you feel tired and fatigued, exhausted, experiencing lack of sleep, weight loss/gain?
3. Have you ever experienced domestic violence? (Please include psychological and physical).
4. During the time you were experiencing domestic violence issues, did you increase or decrease church participation?
5. Have you or anyone you know discussed domestic violence with spiritual leaders?
6. Have you ever felt deficient in your thinking?
7. Are you able to celebrate your individuality?
8. Did the church help you with your domestic violence issues?
9. Was the church a safe place for you to come?
10. Did the church help you to heal?
11. Did the church help you with forgiveness?
12. Is the church able to provide adequate counseling for domestic violence?
13. Are you willing to participate in a workshop dealing with domestic violence?
14. Will you be able to commit to (2) three hour sessions?

ALL WORKSHOPS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

Please contact names below for more information.

Linda Itson

Sherry Hodge

(Phone numbers were given)

Letter's to Pastors

November 10, 2009

To All Administrative Assistants, Superintendents, and Pastors,

Greetings to you and I hope this communication finds you well and in good health.
My name is Linda Irene Itson, and I am a Candidate for The Doctoral Program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton Ohio.

The Purpose of the Doctoral Program at United Theological Seminary:
United Theological Seminary is the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, the Higher Learning Commission of North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. The Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) program at United Theological Seminary (UTS) is an advanced Professional Degree program. In this program, religious leaders guide the development of new models of ministry in which both ministers and ministry contexts are transformed. After studying the context ministry and its ministry needs, each participant works with persons from the ministry context, peers, the Faculty mentor and Professional Associates to design a replicable model of ministry to address a specific need within the measurable change within the ministry. Students spend fives days (January and August) on the UTS campus and 32 contact hours each semester with their Peer Group. The program utilizes distance education to maximize communications and to maximize the need for travel.

My Project: (Dissertation)

- **Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Faith Based Church.**
- **My focus will be on "Forgiveness as a Pathway to Healing".**

Objective of Project;
Participants will have a safe place to understand and deal with unforgiveness. As a result, forgiveness will initiate healing.

So often, victims sit right in our congregations, and no one knows what is actually going on. Ministers/ preachers, may touch on the subject of domestic violence, but it is never addressed in other settings.
Because of certain scriptures, we have ignored the violence and therefore, in many ways have ignored the victim.

In many instances, Christian women stay in dangerous situations longer than a non-Christian might, According to Lois Pruneau, co-coordinator of the domestic violence department of the Family support council in Lake Tahoe "A lot of our domestic violence victims that are of a certain faith say, **their marriage vows are very important to them and they don't know what to do when they are being battered in that marriage.** Being a survivor of Domestic Violence, I had to ask the question, where is the church when people are hurting? What is the role of the

church when people come with baggage? And finally, How does the church deal with Forgiveness and healing? The answer to these and other questions need to be addressed.

Ultimate Goal:
Jurisdictional Counseling Center (Pilot Program Michigan Southeast
Church of God in Christ, Inc. - per Jurisdictional Bishop, Bishop Roger L Jones Sr.)

The purpose of this letter:

As Pastor of your congregation I am asking you to attend (2) 3 hour workshops. The information presented will be informative and valuable.
You must be able to attend both sessions.

Other selected participants will be in attendance.

The training will take place at Greater Holy Temple Ministries.
6702 N. Dort Highway
Flint, MI 48505

DATES: Saturday December 5th. and Saturday December 12th.
TIMES: 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

The data (without the names) in this workshop will be used as part of my research.
Information shared in the workshops will be confidential.
Please contact Evangelist Sherry Hodge @ 810 733-2675 or myself at the number below if you plan on attending.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation. If you are not able to attend, please keep me in your prayers.
You may reach me at the numbers below if there are questions.

Blessings & peace

Linda Itson MA, LLPC, CAAC
Candidate for Doctoral Degree in Ministry
(Phone number was given)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORKSHOP

DECEMBER 5th. & 12th., 2009
Greater Holy Temple C.O.G.I..C. Ministries.
6702 N. Dort Highway
Flint MI. 48505
Facilitator: Linda Irene Itson

Forgiveness - A Pathway to Healing

Workshop

Domestic Violence
and
Sexual Assault in the Faith Based Institution:
Forgiveness: As a Pathway to Healing

Where Are You?
Greater Holy Temple Ministries
6702 N. Dort Highway
Flint, MI 48505
December 5th. & 12th., 2009

Linda Irene Itson
Doctoral Candidate

Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis, Mentor
United Theological Seminary

Agenda

Saturday December 5, 2009
9:00 A.M. - 12: 00 P.M.
Facilitated by Linda Irene Itson

9:00 A.M. - 9:45 A.M.

Prayer

Scripture

Welcome/ Directions for the day.

Introductions

Video Clip – Battered Hearts
Discussion of Power Wheel
Purpose

9:45 A.M. -10:30 A.M.
Workshop1 –
Mr. Chris Johnson .....The Affects of Abuse on The Brain.

10:30 A.M. - 11:15 A.M.
Workshop 2 –
Mrs. Deborah Hamilton .....After The Abuse, What's Next?

11:15 A.M. -12:00 P.M.
Workshop 3 -
Mrs. Melanie Jones .....Forgiveness-
It's Not For The Other Person,
it's For You.

Comments
Close/ Evaluations
Prayer

Agenda

Saturday December 12, 2009
9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.
Facilitated by Linda irene Itson

Prayer

Scripture

Welcome back

Over View

9:45 A.M. - 10:30 A.M.
Workshop 4 -
Mrs. Sherry Hodge ..... Don't Blow Your Top.

10:30 A.M.- 11:15 A.M.
Workshop 5 -
Ms. Margaret Jones...The Power Of An Emotional Shower.

11:15 A.M.- 12:00 P.M.
Workshop 6 -
Ms. LaKeysa Adams .....Releasing The Pain.

Comments

Thank You

Close/Evaluations

Prayer

For being a part of this new journey
with me.
For uncovering the secret of
unforgiveness and reaching for true
Healing.
But most of all, Thank You for sharing
your self.
Blessings, Peace and Healing
Linda Irene Itson

Domestic violence Workshop
Session One
Evaluations

Please rate the following questions with:
1. Strongly Agree 2. Mildly Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly Disagree

1. **Did you gain knowledge about domestic violence?**

2. **Did you gain knowledge about forgiveness and healing?**

3. **Were the presenters knowledgeable about their subject?**

4. **Was the room adequate for training?**

5. **Did you have time to ask questions?**

6. **Have you ever had counseling regarding domestic violence?**

7. **Would you consider counseling from the counselor/therapist in the church?**

8 Would you like to attend another workshop?

9. What workshop would you like to see?

10. Was the time for workshop convenient?

Any other comments:

_____

_____

Domestic Violence Workshop
Session Two

Evaluations

Please rate questions 1-5 with:

1- **Strongly Agree** 2. **Mildly Agree** 3. **Disagree** 4. **Strongly Disagree**

1. **The workshop presented an opportunity to gain knowledge about domestic violence.**

2. **The workshop presented about forgiveness and healing was informative.**

3. **The presenters were knowledgeable about their subject.**

4. **The room was adequate for training.**

5. **Ample time was given to ask questions.**

Answer the following questions 6-10 with yes or no

6. **Have you ever had counseling regarding domestic violence?**

   Yes **No**

7. **Would you consider counselling from the counselor/therapist in the church?**

   Yes **No**

8. **Would you like to attend another workshop?**

   Yes **No**

9. What workshop would you like to see?

10. Was the time for the workshop convenient?

Yes **No**

Any other comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question 1: 100% Strongly Agree
Question 2: 95% Strongly Agree 5% Mildly Agree
Question 3: 100% Strongly Agree
Question 4: 85% Strongly Agree 15% Mildly Agree
Question 5: 100% Strongly Agree
Question 6: 25% Yes 75% No
Question 7: 80% Yes 20% No
Question 8: 100% Yes
Question 9:

- Domestic Violence
- Healing & Forgiving
- Living with your decision to forgive
- Learning to trust
- Marriage
- Death, Family, & Grief
- Men in their role as fathers/women in their role as mother
- Child/Parent Relationships
- Affects of abuse on the brain
- Recognizing mental illness vs demon possession
- Overcoming Depression/ Forgetting Old Baggage
- Brain & Total Body
- Getting along with peers
- Learning the language of youth
- Youth and domestic violence
- Self Esteem
- Effects of Domestic Violence on children
- Rape & Crime
- Addiction in the Church
- Sexual Morality

Question 10: 100% Yes

OTHER COMMENTS:

"I feel this was very well setup and great thoughts were provoked to produce great questions"

"Great Job!"

"I enjoyed all the presenters, they were very knowledgeable. I have had personal experience with counselors in the church, and I would rather seek a professional outside the church that is a Christian. Church therapists have to be licensed counselors"

"I really enjoyed all the speakers and questions as well as comments, this is much needed in our churches"

"I would like you to expose this to our kids, as well as teenagers."

"Longer sessions, Breakfast was nice, Please Do Another Class, We need more of this!"

"We need more workshops & the time needs to be longer. This was great!"

"I really enjoyed the workshop because it 's close to home and gave me a new outlook on life and give me hope to move forward"

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